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**Adopting a Chinese Mantle  
Designing and Appropriating Chineseness 1750-1820**

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**Adopting a Chinese Mantle:  
Designing and Appropriating Chineseness 1750-1820**

**Emma Helen Henke Newport**

**King's College London**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Research**

## **Abstract**

The thesis examines methods of imagining and appropriating China in Britain in the period 1750 to 1820. It considers how those who engaged with the textual and material culture of China depicted and envisioned China. The thesis identifies a set of practices by which eighteenth-century writers, scientists, and designers appropriated elements of Chinese culture: adopting a Chinese mantle in the dressing of bodies, the dressing of rooms and the dressing of text as Chinese. Extending the work of Chi-Ming Yang on performing China beyond theatrical performance, this thesis explores the limits and effects of performance of Chineseness in home decoration, scientific thought, and satire.

Divided into three sections, the first addresses the relationship between women and Chinese ornamentation within a domestic setting. Identifying a theory of ornamentation prevalent in eighteenth-century culture, it addresses the way women negotiated their engagement with the Chinese aesthetic, due to the negative associations it carried. It shows how the appropriation of Chinese goods represented a novel and alternative method of expression and identity formation, even permitting the recreation of an Empire at home. The second section examines how China becomes an object of study and the practices it produces, including translation, location, dislocation and display of exotic objects and texts. This section brings to light an account of Lady Banks's Chinese porcelain collection as an example of how networks of exchange were created and complicated by the influx of Chinese goods, materials and ideas. The final section addresses the way in which satire employs a ludic Chinese mantle to challenge received ideas about aesthetics, monarchy and misrule.

The thesis argues that adopting a Chinese mantle contributes to the fluid concept of identity formation whereby the performance of identity, through Chinese objects, dress and speech, helped to project a civilised and sophisticated personality. It charts British delight and anxiety felt towards China: playfulness and intellectual dismantling, rather than Orientalist aggression, were the primary methods of accommodation until the militarisation of the British and Chinese Imperial projects in the nineteenth century.

## **List of Abbreviations**

BL	British Library
BM	British Museum
BM (NH)	British Museum Natural History Department
DB	‘Dairy Book’
FRO	Flintshire Record Office
HL	Huntington Library
KA	Kent Archives
RS	Royal Society
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary

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Finally, I would not have been able to complete this thesis without the support of the Art and Humanities Research Council, Benjamin Parker and my mother, Helen Newport.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Ollie.

## **Adopting a Chinese Mantle: Designing and Appropriating Chineseness 1750-1820**

When I ceased to look upon [Dr Courayer] as a missionary, I began to consider him as the best piece of Chinese furniture I had ever seen, and could hardly forbear offering him a place on my chimney-piece.

Elizabeth Montagu to Gilbert West, Esq. London, Oct. 31st, 1751<sup>1</sup>

In the eighteenth century, China represented a place of infinite possibility fashioned by its distant exoticism and its domestic familiarity: a country far away and inaccessible, even to East India Company traders who were confined to Canton, yet one that produced goods that would eventually emerge from the aristocratic cabinet of curiosities to sit on or in every middle-class mantelpiece and kitchen cabinet.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, texts written by missionaries and merchants and translations of Chinese works arrived in increasing number in a journey from China that usually included stops in India and continental Europe before reaching British shores. British artists, writers, scholars and manufacturers reacted to the new objects and ideas entering the British marketplace by producing counterfeit and replica Chinese goods and texts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Montagu, *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu: With Some of the Letters of Her Correspondents*, 2 vols (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1825), II, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> Reigniting twentieth-century interest in sinology, the art-historian Hugh Honour identified the fantastical appeal of distant China. See Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: A Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961). This view is shared by Raymond Dawson in *The Chinese Chameleon: an Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). Further references from this edition.

<sup>3</sup> Ros Ballaster discusses Oriental tales, authentic and invented, in *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The combination of industrialisation and an expanding global network of exchange contributed to a popular response to this growing aesthetic influence: the adoption of Chineseness in dress and in the decoration of rooms, whether a cabinet of curiosity, a china closet, the bedroom or the dressing room itself, as well as the figurative, playful dressing up of British texts and ideas as authored or inspired by the Chinese. Thus, people began to dress rooms, bodies, ideas and texts as Chinese: adopting a Chinese mantle.

Connected from the tenth century in a sparse manner by the silk roads between China and Europe, by the early modern period there was still only a minimum of goods and knowledge transferring between East and West. The record of objects from China in European hands reveals them to be so rare and inordinately expensive that only a tiny number of vastly expensive pieces of Chinese porcelain, glass, and silk resided in the cabinets of the nobility and monarchs, including Elizabeth I, whose inventories included seven pieces of Chinese porcelain.<sup>4</sup> Until the British East India Company managed to establish a trading post in Taiwan in 1672, Chinese goods were received only in the houses of the richest of the aristocracy. In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, trading companies heading to the East Indies by sea flourished and, in doing so, altered the intellectual, aesthetic and topographical landscape of Britain. By the mid-eighteenth century, a profusion of wallpaper, furniture, porcelain, pagodas, Chinese houses and rooms, porcelain dairies, and fancy dress fuelled this ‘monstrous’ aestheticism, which was as attractive, curious, amusing and endearing as much as it was threatening to a public that was enjoying increasing levels of literacy and purchasing power.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stacey Pierson, *Collectors, Collections and Museums: The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560-1960* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 25. See also John Carswell, Jean McClure Mudge, David and Alfred Smart, eds., *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and its Impact on the western World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press & The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, 1985) and Emily Byrne Curtis, *Glass Exchange between Europe and China, 1550-1800: Diplomatic, Mercantile and Technological Interactions* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> See David Porter, ‘Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste’ *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35.3 (2002): 395-411  
<<http://muse.jhu.edu/>> [Accessed 13 November 2010].



Once the British position in China was strengthened by a move to Canton in 1700, consumer culture underwent a dramatic change as goods from around the globe began arriving in ever greater quantities: total imports from the East Indies in 1700-1 totalled £775 000; by 1750, £1 101 000; 1772-3, £2 203 000; 1789-90 £3256 000; 1797-8, £5 785 000. The only drop was recorded in the period 1780-81, when import revenue from East Indies fell to £1 749 000; by 1797-98, of the nine regions from which Britain imported goods, the East Indies was the second greatest supplier of goods.<sup>6</sup>

Closely linked to nascent empire building through the militarised mercantilism of various European nations' East India Companies, the expansion of global trade had unarguable and profound social consequences. As Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace has observed, 'During an age of Imperial expansion, a woman's agency to consume became both her political imperative and the potential cause of her personal demise'.<sup>7</sup>

In 1750, the Tory political satirist John Shebbeare despaired of this Chinese influx:

Almost everywhere all is Chinese, every chair in an apartment, the frames of the glasses, the tables must be Chinese; the walls are covered with Chinese papers filled with figures which resemble nothing in God's Creation, and which prudent nations would prohibit for the sake

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<sup>6</sup> Phyllis Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1688-1959* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 87. In *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Maxine Berg notes that the most popular imported products shifted from textiles and porcelain to tea and coffee. In 1777-78, eight vessels returned carrying 345 tons of porcelain: still a significant amount, but representing a smaller proportion of total imports. In 'Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution', Maxine Berg gives an overview of the change in the British economies and the rise in consumer power and the luxury good as a result of economic surplus, particularly discussing Asiatic influences on consumer behaviour. Maxine Berg, 'Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution', *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, eds. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29. 2 (Winter, 1995/1996): 153-166, (p. 165).

of pregnant women [...] In one chamber, all the pagodas and distorted animals of the East are piled up and called the beautiful decorations of a chimney-piece; on the sides of the room on brackets of the Chinese taste, stand grinning porcelain lions and arbors made in the same ware.<sup>8</sup>

Shebbeare perceives the threat of the Chinese influence not only to the body but the body politic.<sup>9</sup> He indicates the extraordinary range of Chinese commodities, designs and ideas that were being imported and newly influenced eighteenth-century art, interior design, landscape, and architecture.<sup>10</sup> Shebbeare's view is typical of a cultural unease that is reflected in such literature on taste and his adoption of an Italian pseudonym, Batista Angeloni, through which to perform his critique, emphasises the division between proponents of the neoclassical and those who embraced the Chinese aesthetic. At the same time, men such as Thomas Chippendale and William Chambers were publishing books on taste that promoted the Chinese taste.<sup>11</sup> In part, the early populism of the Chinese taste resulted in an intellectual and aesthetic snobbery was resistant to the influx of the new.

However, the emerging sinophilism of Voltaire and Francois Quesnay presented China as a potential model of benign despotism and meritocratic bureaucracy from which Europe could benefit.<sup>12</sup> In turn, English commentators were inspired to re-examine China, often from a position of ambivalence.

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<sup>8</sup> John Shebbeare, *Letters on the English Nation*, 2 vols. (London, 1756), I, pp. 261-262.

<sup>9</sup> Shebbeare was a reactionary, who, according to Fanny Burney, believed that the Scots and women were the two greatest evils on earth. *A Known Scribbler: Frances Burney on Literary Life*, ed. by Justine Crump (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion of the volume and range of goods, see John E. Wills, Jr., *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800: Trade, Settlement, Diplomacy, and Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and Patrick J. N. Tuck, *Britain and the China Trade 1635-1842*, ed. by Patrick J. N. Tuck, 10 vols (London: Routledge, 2000), VIII.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman & Cabinet-Maker's Director* (London: T. Osborne, 1754) and William Chambers, *Treatise on Civil Architecture* (London: J. Haberkorn, 1759).

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion, see H. Pak, *China and the West: Myths and Reality in History* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1974), p. 56.

Nonetheless, this ambivalence was challenged by an increasingly positive emphasis placed on exploration and global travel, and a developing culture of curiosity and display which evolved into early museums and valorised novel, unusual and foreign objects. British responses to China became more complex and nuanced, resulting in reactions that did not share Shebbeare's reflexive horror of the new and the exotic.<sup>13</sup> These individual responses were driven by varying levels of consumer power combined with a desire for luxury and exotic goods, and united with curiosity.

These interactions were multiple and endlessly shifting according to changing agendas, activities and aims, which were shaped by national, religious, or individual perspectives and resulted in a correspondingly constellatory British response to China. These responses demonstrate an enduring but fluctuating and individualised relationship between British subjects and the Empire of China. Tea-drinking, silk-wearing and the reading of Jesuit missionaries' texts about the distant land in which they were living all added to the methods of consuming China, helping to form a European understanding of what it meant for a product, person or text to be Chinese.

The work of French missionaries to China, including Du Halde, Le Comte and Père Amiot, influenced British texts, including Arthur Murphy's *Orphan of China* (1759); Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* (1760); Thomas Percy's *Chinese Miscellany* (1762); the anonymous *The Chinese Spy* (1765); William Chambers's *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772); Horace Walpole's tale *Mi Li* (1785); William Mason's poem *Kien Long: the Chinese Imperial Eclogue* (1792). Just a tiny fraction of hundreds of creative works inspired by or translated from Chinese or from the works of missionaries and ambassadors to China, the list does not include the many factual dictionaries, histories and geographies that were printed, such as the accounts written by those who attended the British ambassadorial missions in 1792 and 1817.

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on the evolution from cabinet to museum display culture, see *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) and Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Fashion, politics, popular culture and, at times, high culture, created trends that presented phases in the ways in which individuals responded to the influx of Chinese products and ideas. The relationship between the British and China was more nuanced than an unthinking mania driven by consumer instincts alone. As David Porter has shown, these peaks and troughs in interest and attitude occurred simultaneously, resulting in a constellation of responses that defy a 'chronological or schematically unilinear narrative on a vast and polyvalent body of material'.<sup>14</sup> China's distance and immensity, as well as the range and novelty of its products, philosophy, history and image, created diverse responses. Printed material sent over by missionaries and merchants gave a wider audience access to a mostly physically inaccessible land, which added to the emblematic images of and products from China that were displayed in European cabinets of curiosity.<sup>15</sup>

### **Recent Scholarship on Relations between China and the West**

Occidental scholarship on relations between China and the West has proposed various strategies for analysis, focusing particularly on China, too large and distant to be dissected comprehensively, as representative of something other than itself alone. These representations include China as model; waxing to Europe's waning; waning to Europe's waxing; China as statue or monument; China as mirror; China and Europe in binary opposition; China as contradictory; China and Europe as dialectical; China as defined by its relationship with a single western nation.

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<sup>14</sup> David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010), p. 9. Further references from this edition. David Porter also considers the representation of Chineseness in British culture in *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> For an account of the Parisian elite's passion for collecting exotic and luxury goods, including Chinese lacquerwork, porcelain and figures and a description of the Borges-Foucaultian 'Chinese encyclopedia', see Bettina Dietz and Thomas Nutz 'Collections Curieuses: The Aesthetics of Curiosity and Elite Lifestyle in Eighteenth-Century Paris' *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29.3 (2005): 44-75 <<http://muse.jhu.edu>> [Accessed 7 November 2011]. Chinese people gained an insight into European tastes and knowledge base through the reciprocal consumption of texts brought into China by missionaries and which were ultimately held by the library of P'e'tang; see Hubert Germain Verhaeren, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque du P'e'tang* (Beijing: Imprimerie de Lazariste, 1949).

The historian G. F. Hudson offers an early twentieth-century view of China, which acknowledges cross-cultural contact between China and the West extending from the medieval period to the eighteenth century, but predominantly focuses on the Hellenic influence on China. One of the major pieces of scholarship Europe and China that emerged during this period, Hudson's work was reviewed as 'one of the most scholarly and original' texts on China to be produced during the interwar period.<sup>16</sup>

Hudson emphasises Chinese ossification in the face of white British progress, although he is also critical of the lack of current common knowledge about China amongst ordinary people, arguing that the eighteenth-century educated public was far better informed than his current readership. China is represented as a relic or monument, to be admired but consigned to the gallery of human achievement.

If then the whole Earth is 'westernised', does it not follow that the old Asiatic cultures are without significance for a good European apart from their interest for comparative anthropology, that they are blind alleys of history, altogether alien to our life and thought and now brought to an end? Not at all. They have left behind great monuments of art which are, or should be, the heritage of all civilised men.<sup>17</sup>

By the 1960s, a changing post-war interpretation of China was emerging, in which eighteenth-century China came to be understood as representing fantasy and contradiction. The art historian Raymond Dawson acknowledges China's contradictory status:

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<sup>16</sup> J. H. Stewart Lockhart, 'Europe and China: A Survey of Their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800 by G. F. Hudson', review of *Europe and China: A Survey of Their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800* by G. F. Hudson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 (1932): 672-675, (p. 672) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25194576>> [Accessed 15 February 2014].

<sup>17</sup> G. F. Hudson, *Europe and China: a Survey of their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800* (London: Edward Arnold, 1931; reprint 1961), pp. 10-11.

China has at one time or another been thought to be rich and poor, advanced and backward, wise and stupid, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, honest and deceitful—there is no end to the list of contradictory qualities which have been attributed to her.<sup>18</sup>

Dawson suggests that fantasy is a limited view of a place which people do not fully comprehend. Dawson suggests that for the eighteenth-century European, China ‘was the country of their dreams, especially since few could ever be roused from their sleep by going there. China was not a reality, but a pattern or a Utopia. It was God’s country’.<sup>19</sup> Whilst China’s intense impact on thought and imagination continues to be a recurring theme in the study of East-West relations, thinkers such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and David Porter have presented more complicated understandings of imagination, demanding a greater emphasis on socio-cultural contexts and acknowledging the unreliability of epistemologies of knowledge dependent on language. They stress the significance of how imagination creates concepts of China, partly, but only partly, related to its objects, landscapes, ideas and philosophy.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is seminal to any discussion of this field and has been influential in many disciplines including history, anthropology, literary studies and translation theory and so proves its interdisciplinary value. For Said, Orientalism represents a vision of a political, linguistic and socio-cultural structure that promoted difference between the familiar West and the alien East. Said explores the relationship between the two halves of the globe through a discourse of Orientalism, emphasising how the oriental has served as myth and stereotype: an attitude that intensified western epistemologies of knowledge emerged and became established, unifying and concretising knowledge of the East into the stable straitjackets of western intellectual hegemonies. As a result, Orientalism offered a dominant strategy for imagining, reimagining, restructuring, and having authority over the East.

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<sup>18</sup> Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Dawson, *The Chinese Chameleon*, p. 57.

Historians have been influenced significantly by Said's perspective. Just over a decade after Said, Colin Mackerras's *Western Images of China* (1989) offers a significant account of the ways in which China was a simultaneous model for and threat to western epistemologies. Like Said, Mackerras places great emphasis on charting connections between power and knowledge and knowledge and reality. Mackerras also exhibits a Foucauldian understanding of language and truth, acknowledging that he too has his own version of China, constructed from his own experiences, background and education. Likewise, when accounting for the representation of the mysteriousness of the East, Rupert Hodder is clearly indebted to the work of Said as he suggests that the 'emergence of the canon of China's isolation and superiority' was fuelled by western 'sinologists [...] fuelled by political sentiment, [which] could be used to construct a mystical image of a civilisation at least equal to that of "the West", analogous to a magic-mirror'.<sup>20</sup>

Mackerras retains a narrative of paradigm shifts in East-West relations in his research around the idea that 'there has been a strong tendency for one country to dominate the West's perception of China. In the eighteenth century it was France, in the nineteenth Britain, and for the most of the twentieth, unquestionably, it was the United States'.<sup>21</sup> In a similar vein, the historian John S. Gregory describes a dialectical rather than contradictory vision of China, positioning China in contrast to but in connection with the West:

For nearly three centuries of limited but steadily growing contact the West was the learner, the suppliant, seeking more and more contact with this vast but integrated civilisation which promised great riches, both cultural and economic.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Rupert Hodder, *In China's Image: Chinese Self-Perception in Western Thought* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 19, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> John S. Gregory, *The West and China since 1500* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), p. 2.

He constructs an overarching narrative of the eighteenth century as a period of ‘coming together, rather slowly [...] on China’s terms’, with the nineteenth century characterised by ‘closer encounters, on the West’s terms’.<sup>23</sup> Whilst Gregory touches upon the West being ‘by no means uniform in its approach’, his work presents the relationship ‘sometimes in very broad-brush terms’.<sup>24</sup>

Said’s understanding of an East-West paradigm has resulted in a legacy of binary frameworks, although this binarism has been increasingly rethought and challenged by more recent scholarship, including that of David Porter. Nonetheless, Said’s emphasis on metaphor and metonymy has retained a particular value in discussing Sino-British cultural contacts, particularly in his critique of language and its challenges, failings and instabilities. Said founds his ideas on Nietzsche’s concept of language:

A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.<sup>25</sup>

Said uses Nietzsche’s concept of language to critique Orientalism’s ‘objective discoveries’, listing the work of those ‘who edited texts and translated them [...] produced positivistically verifiable learning’.<sup>26</sup>

Metaphor provides David Porter with a suitably encompassing and flexible framework for his own analysis of China, as he adopts what he calls a “constellatory” approach.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Gregory, pp. 29; 72.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘On Truth and lie in an extra-moral sense’, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), pp. 46-7, quoted in Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 202.

<sup>26</sup> Said, pp. 202-203.



In developing this strategy, Porter is reacting against the reductive nature of any fixed model of explaining these cross-cultural contacts, proposing instead a diverse approach that brings together multiple experiences and methods of production of knowledge about China. Porter identifies in Chinese goods ‘a double life in the elimination of the period, leaving a tangle of tracks and traces abundant in interpretive possibilities’.<sup>28</sup> Although exchanges of goods and ideas occurred between Britain and China, China’s inaccessibility ensured that it was recreated in the British eye, constructed from the materials and texts available for purchase.<sup>29</sup> China offered novel forms, which originated beyond Occidental spheres of knowledge and taste, and so presented new sources of anxiety for producers, disseminators and consumers of knowledge. Due to the interpretative nature of people’s reactions to China, Porter has argued for the ‘representative illegitimacy of China’.<sup>30</sup>

In his extended discussion of the aesthetics of Chinese taste, published in the book that emerged from an article written in 1999, Porter identifies how the ‘prodigious exports of porcelain, lacquerware, silk wall coverings, and the artistic models they embodied’ resulted in ‘undermin[ing] the status of classical western civilisation as the sole forbear of English aesthetic culture’.<sup>31</sup> Porter reads this illegitimacy as resulting in:

The inevitable promiscuity of taste and style, a heightened awareness of alternatives to classicist models of aesthetic pleasure and a healthy

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<sup>27</sup> Porter, *Chinese Taste*, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> Porter, *Chinese Taste*, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace explores the specific intersection between women, porcelain and consumption, which is conceived in largely pejorative terms in ‘Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England’: 153-167. For an excellent dissection of eighteenth-century curiosity, see Barbara Benedict’s *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> David Porter, ‘Chinoiserie and the Aesthetics of Illegitimacy’, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 28 (1999): 27-54.

<sup>31</sup> Porter, *Chinese Taste*, p. 35.

scepticism towards the oft-repeated claims to a pure and certified lineage for the triumphs of English art.<sup>32</sup>

By connecting exoticism to a disruption of heritage in a parallel of eroticism disrupting purity of lineage, Porter reworks Said's view of the fetishisation of the Orient into a wider and more complex Occidental reaction that is ambivalent yet reflective. Porter identifies responses coloured by doubt and uncertainty which taint the moral and aesthetic certainty of western cultural hegemonies.

In *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (2002), Porter argues that:

The majority were content simply to enjoy a delicious surrender to the unrelenting exoticism of total illegibility [...] [t]o luxuriate in a flow of unmeaning eastern signs, to bask in the glow of one's own projected fantasies, such were pleasures afforded by China's arrival in the marketplace of contemporary taste.<sup>33</sup>

However, in *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (2010), Porter revises his earlier view of illegibility to present gradations of eighteenth-century experience and response to intense spectacle and sensory assault. In this work, Porter notes a parallel between the 'cultural illegibility' of 'enchanted English opera-goers [and] collectors of chinoiserie', as both groups 'seemed to revel in a surface play of sensual impressions divorced from any legitimising cultural context, to take a perverse pleasure in their own estrangement from rational forms of understanding'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>33</sup> Porter, *Ideographia*, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup> Porter, *Chinese Taste*, p. 29.

Porter argues that:

Chinoiserie sustained its charm by mediating its immediate sensual gratifications through the simultaneous distancing effect of cultural estrangement. Its pleasures escaped the risk of vulgar satiety [...] not through the usual, prescribed process of intellectual transcendence but [...] through the inescapable recognition of unintelligible difference. The desire for masterful possession evoked by its sensual allure was endlessly postponed and hence enlivened and prolonged by its very illegibility.<sup>35</sup>

The illegibility of chinoiserie bewitches through its ‘endless enchanting counterpoint of gratification and deferral’.<sup>36</sup> Porter denies any encounter between Britain and China as ‘pure [or] hybrid in any straightforward sense, but rather is constituted paradoxically through a simultaneous appropriation and denial of “Chineseness”’.<sup>37</sup>

Porter recommends the use of case studies in the exploration of moments between Britain and China: ‘to read the artifacts of a moment of contact is to confront testimony to variously motivated acts of translation and response [...] [and] to bear witness to the imaginative epiphany [...] [of] the recognition of difference’.<sup>38</sup> Porter’s encyclopaedic collection of essays discuss the invention of Englishness, gendered utopias, Chinoiserie, gardening and fashion, offering a snapshot of eighteenth-century attitudes that leaves room for further exploration. Porter hopes that his ‘unorthodox approach’ will:

Yield observations that some will find surprising or perhaps overly conjectural. As thought experiments, they are motivated by a belief in the generative value of reading against the grain and of informed

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

speculation; they are concerned less with pronouncing definitive conclusions than with generating productive new modes and directions of inquiry.<sup>39</sup>

In order to reflect the variety and individual nature of English people's reactions to China, I have adopted Porter's method of using a series of case studies, which reveal divergences more than similarity.

The performativity of China-in-England has been addressed by Chi-Ming Yang, who extends Porter's work on the representation of China by centring primarily on literal performance: the stage productions that employed China as a setting or used a Chinese plot, such as Arthur Murphy's *The Orphan of China*, an anglicised version of Voltaire's *L'Orphelin de la Chêne*. Yang's work, following Porter, resists the construction of binaries.<sup>40</sup> She refers instead to the doubleness implicit in the British performing as Chinese, but she breaks down the perceived binary of virtue and vice that China represented. Yang shows how 'the structure of ambivalence toward China's moral and economic exemplarity defies a strict binary division of East and West, vice and virtue' and reveals the mediation between 'contested systems of value'. As Yang observes, the 'self-other binary fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity and instability of East-West relations, not to mention of *an* East or *a* West'.<sup>41</sup> Yang chooses 'doubleness' in preference to hybridity to decouple her discussion from post-colonial discourse.

This thesis takes Yang's notion of China and Britain's doubleness and explores new lines of enquiry: what does it mean to dress a room, text or body in the Chinese manner? What does this doubleness say about truth and untruth, authenticity and inauthenticity, self and other? What constituted real and imagined versions of what Porter calls 'chineseness' in the eighteenth century? In

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Chi-Ming Yang, *Performing China: Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-Century England, 1660-1760* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011). Further references from this edition.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 186-187.

other words, what does it mean when an eighteenth-century individual adopts a Chinese mantle?

The idea of ‘doubleness’ possesses meanings pertinent to the adoption of a Chinese mantle: it implies being composed of two like or unlike parts and can indicate resemblance or dissemblance; the word accommodates the social, moral and aesthetic ambivalence that China represented. The duality of the knowingness of the fantasy and the fantasy of knowing China are predominant strands in eighteenth-century attitudes to the Chinese empire.

The adoption of a mantle of Chineseness refers to the specific type of performance associated with the dressing up of the self, a room or a text as appearing Chinese.<sup>42</sup> The range of case studies reveals a mostly willing and conscious adoption of the mantle of Chineseness, whether in playful masquerade, in the decoration of a mantle with Chinese objects (and, by extension, the wider room), or in the dressing up of texts as Chinese. The relationship between self and other is neither binary nor hybrid, but symbiotic. As eighteenth-century interest in China discovered parity and contrast with western ideas and tastes, so the dressing up of a text, person or room with an appearance of Chineseness complicates apparent binaries of self and other; domestic and foreign; authentic and inauthentic; performed and genuine. However, when boundaries between connoisseurship, which maintains critical distance, and obsession, which does not, are blurred, ridicule becomes a way of articulating anxiety about the transgression.

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<sup>42</sup> This is exemplified in the porcelain mantelpiece decoration of the actor Garrick by the Chinese porcelain modeller Tan Chit Qua, also known more popularly as Tan Chet-Qua, in a Chinese-style frock-coat, dated c. 1770. Garrick’s depiction codes the actor’s fashionability and his craft in the wearing the garb of another whilst retaining the essential identity beneath the frock-coat. Garrick took advantage of the centrality of the mantelpiece in a room: a miniaturised stage in the house, to which eyes would be drawn, Garrick could literally be centre-stage in a person’s home. At the same time, Tan Chet-Qua, who briefly became a household name during his two-year sojourn in London, could promote his own skills through the association with Garrick. Tan Chet Qua was depicted in Johann Zoffany’s portrait of the *Royal Academicians* (1771) and lent his name, without his permission, to William Chambers’s ‘Explanatory Discourse’ annexed to his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772;1773).

Re-creating China or a Chinese voice textually raises the same issues of authenticity, imitation and replication that fed eighteenth-century attitudes to China and Chinese goods.

The possibility of playful disguise offered by China ensured that British writers, thinkers, collectors, architects and designers were tempted by the novel mantle of the Chinese. Adopting a Chinese mantle, or a mantle of Chinese-ness, raises issues of mimesis and mimicry, inverting the post-colonial thesis established in Bhabha's 'Of Mimicry and Man', in which the colonised subject imitates the dress, speech and behaviour of the white coloniser, to become a version of 'reverse mimicry'.<sup>43</sup>

Issues of the inauthentic and authentic re-emerge in both versions of mimicry. As Bhabha describes, 'the desire to emerge as 'authentic' through mimicry [...] is the final irony of partial representation'.<sup>44</sup> Bhabha's work on the overlap or between-ness of intercultural contact retains useful elements to help shape a framework for approaching Anglo-Chinese contact during the eighteenth century. Kristin Swenson Musselman explores the colonial reverse mimicry in which the colonising race mimics the colonised people's traditions, customs, speech, dress. Musselman argues that the western mimickmen and women lay themselves open to ridicule: 'their audience is entertained by the spectacle', performing the role 'in order to secure employment or financial gain [...] or simply in order to survive in the ambiguous and dangerous space within which the subject exists'.<sup>45</sup> Whilst Musselman's interpretation appears to describe Montagu's attitude to Dr Courayer, the motivations for and the outcomes of mimicry are far more complicated when read from an interdisciplinary perspective that brings together literary mimesis, dressing up a room or body as Chinese.

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<sup>43</sup> For further discussion of reverse mimicry as performed by the French, see Kristin Swenson Musselman, 'The Other I: Questions of Identity in Une Vie de Boy', *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures: Critical Essays*, ed. by Kamal Salhi (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), pp. 126-140.

<sup>44</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> Musselman, p. 133.

People's interest in Chinese texts and objects is expressed through recognisable multiple recurrences, whether in shifts from veneration to weary saturation, or in fads for certain wallpapers, silks and porcelain, yet even while these general patterns can be identified, alternative views were held at the same time. Consequently, from the 1760s onwards, in a period typically considered as one of declining passion for Chinoiserie, there are many examples of significant figures who ignored the dictates of fashion, or who did not simply transition straightforwardly from mimesis to mockery.<sup>46</sup>

Bhabha identifies:

The interstices - the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – [in which] the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated [...] [and during which] terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively.<sup>47</sup>

Chi-Ming Yang avoids discussing mimesis and instead adopts imitation and liminality as the terms to help convey the between-ness of performing China, largely to escape the post-colonial binds that are inadequate in expressing the relationship between Britain and China, itself an Empire that was never colonised by a western hegemonic power.

### **Mantles and Mantelpieces**

The mantle as thing and concept, role or idea serves as a heuristic device to explicate the premise of this thesis: that the intersections and interplay between material texts and objects and immaterial ideas, tastes and opinions reveal the patterns and particularities of responses to China among the British aristocracy

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<sup>46</sup> Phoebe Scott, 'Mimesis to Mockery: Chinoiserie Ornament in the Social Space of Eighteenth-Century France', *Philament: An Online Journal of the Arts and Culture*, 5 (Sydney: University of Sydney, January 2005)  
<[http://sydney.edu.au/arts/publications/philament/issue5\\_contents.htm](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/publications/philament/issue5_contents.htm)> [Accessed 20 January 2012]

<sup>47</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

and gentry. Whilst the mantle conveys the performative aspect of decorating one's text, room or self in a Chinese manner, which has special bearing upon the masquerading aspects of recreating the Chinese taste, the mantelpiece offers the particular dual functions of utility and decorativeness and of intimate locale, warmth and close proximity contrasting with the monument to public display.<sup>48</sup>

The noun mantle refers to a cloak-like covering, but also anything 'which enfolds, enwraps, or encloses as a mantle; an immaterial thing likened to or described as a covering' (*OED* 'mantle' 2.). As a verb, the obsolete use was 'to disguise or palliate a fault', introducing the concept of trickery and masquerade, as well as the problematised nature of masquerading in text, object or dress. The challenges of a foreign aesthetic and the perceived sexual and social threat of the Chinese taste, particularly in its association with dangerous femininity, are also encapsulated in the definition of mantling as an idea or emotion causing blood to rise to the surface of the face and producing a blush. Finally, taking on a mantle also suggests 'a duty or position of responsibility, authority, leadership, *especially* one assumed or inherited by one person from another. Also (in later use): any specified role or persona' (*OED* 'mantle' 4.), evoking the duty and responsibility of communicating with, and communicating, China and hints at the significance of dissemination ideas from one to another. The individual nature of the way in which adopting a Chinese mantle is undertaken in the home, in scholarly

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<sup>48</sup> The Chinese taste includes Chinese texts, objects and ideas made popular and consumed by the European market; European objects sent to China for extra decoration before being returned; European products made in emulation of the Chinese versions; and European finishes to original Chinese ware. The term 'Chinoiserie' was not used in publication until 1840, and first appears in the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie* in the 1880s. Until then, Oriental or Chinese taste or style were used interchangeably. Nevertheless, despite its anachronistic status, the term chinoiserie is frequently adopted to describe a particular form of eighteenth-century Chinese decoration. See, for example, Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon, 1993); Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie: Chinese influence on European decorative art 17th and 18th centuries* (New York: Vendome Press; London: Sotheby, 1981); Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: the Impact of Oriental Styles on western Art and Decoration* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977). Chinese taste is perhaps more encompassing of Chinese ideas, objects, literatures, philosophy, aesthetics, religion, and language, which all served to influence received wisdoms, variously being used as a mirror, to critique or laud the British or European equivalent through positive, negative or ambivalent comparison.



endeavour and in satire contributes to and reflects the dynamic and complicated culture of the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

In considering specific case studies of those who adopted a Chinese mantle in their work or surroundings, an interdisciplinary synthesis of different forms of responses to the changing nature of contact with China can be teased out. It also permits the exploration of sequences of influence and emerging networks of knowledge, taste and ideas that spread through the sharing and transmission of texts and objects. The mantle gives its name to the mantel-piece or mantelpiece as the decorative shelf and support above a fireplace.

With the exceptions of examples such as the Brighton Pavilion, which in all ways is a unique and extraordinary edifice, and Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill as it was decorated in the 1750s, the typical way to employ the Chinese aesthetic was in architectural accents: some ornaments over the fireplace, a china closet, a Chinese bedroom or dressing room, or perhaps an ornamental garden pavilion or pagoda. The Chinese taste was almost never applied in every room, nor to the exterior of the main building. The Chinese style was one of contained excess, a little pocket of alterity. The Chinese aesthetic could even be limited to a few choice pieces of blue and white porcelain either side of the mantelpiece. Consequently, the mantelpiece functions as a metonym for the Chinese taste: it conveys the containment of the aesthetic and its use in dressing a room.

The mantelpiece additionally serves as a metonym for wider issues: tensions exigent in the fluctuating interest in Chineseness; the dualities of decorative functionality and the interplay between public and private; and a corresponding desire to acquire novelty and originality whilst adhering to taste and fashion. In Herbert Rodwell's domestic comedy from 1833, *The Chimney Piece: A Farce, in One Act*, the mantelpiece, or chimney-piece, is the focal point about which people gather to exchange information and, at one point, through which a subversive

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<sup>49</sup> Middle-class responses to the porcelain fad are considered by Sarah Richards in *Eighteenth Century Ceramics: Products for a Civilised Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) and to a lesser extent in *Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe*, eds. Julie Emerson, Jennifer Chen, Mimi Gardner Gates (Seattle: University of Washington Press & Seattle Art Museum, 2000).

character enters the room. The mantelpiece represents the heart of the home and so the heart of the action, whilst also referencing domesticity and its connection with women, who are also deemed useful and ornamental.

As the closing lines declare, the mantelpiece, like porcelain and many other Chinese goods, is ‘both useful (*pointing to Mrs Muddlebrain*) and ornamental’.<sup>50</sup>

My case studies examine methods of adopting a Chinese mantle in order to identify practices of knowing China, even though the practitioners in the case studies utilise different materials, texts and interests. Ambivalence in practices relating to China, in part due to its relative unknowability in contrast to the occidental desire to know result in a fugitive China, as fragile as the translucent imperial porcelain that became a metonym for its place of origin, and as easily in danger of slipping from one's grasp. Like Porter's work on the Chinese aesthetic, this thesis is not a history of China, but a study of English attitudes to China. This thesis will reflect the diversity and multiplicities associated with the complex interactions of an established and an emerging empire and how China was represented through design and appropriation.

In my research, the focus is upon *object* as well as objective discoveries and the subjective, varied eighteenth-century responses which actively and deliberately engage with practices of metonymy, embellishment, enhancement and transposition. Although the following chapters document evidence of the struggle of emerging epistemologies of knowledge and the development of strategies to analyse an influx of new objects and texts, these strategies and practices, and the written accounts of their development, are neither firm nor canonical.

My thesis is divided into three sections: ‘Home’, ‘Science’ and ‘Satire’. In employing a thematic as opposed to chronological approach, and filtering the themes through case studies, I analyse the multifarious imaginings of China: how it was written, depicted and envisioned by those interested in textual and material productions of China. Each section is introduced with an explication of current

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<sup>50</sup> G. Herbert Rodwell, *The Chimney Piece: A Farce, in One Act. Performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane* (London: Miller, Covent Garden, 1833).

scholarship and of the broader eighteenth-century context of the theme of the section before focusing on the case studies that follow.

My choice of case studies turns on the influential nature of each individual who features in it, as nearly all of the subjects of the case studies moved in the intellectual networks of the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries and, in turn, produced and exchanged ideas, information and objects that facilitated academic and social interactions. The subjects of the case studies are from the landed gentry and upper-classes rather than the nobility, representing a section of society who interacted with a more diverse group of people, including merchants, manufacturers, royalty and adventurers.

The first section, 'Home', looks at domestic representations of the Chinese aesthetic. It explores the representative illegitimacy of China and how, ironically, it legitimises the female decorator through the cases of Elizabeth Montagu and a provincial counterpart, Elizabeth Yorke of Erddig. A room or a building that is dressed in the accoutrements of Chineseness is a space dressed with Chinese furniture, Chinese objects, and Chinese wallpaper, all serving to give the appearance of Chineseness. Mid-eighteenth century critics could quite reasonably observe that 'not one in a thousand of all the stiles, gates, rails, pales, chairs, temples, chimney-pieces, &c &c &c which are called Chinese, has the least resemblance to anything that China ever saw.'<sup>51</sup> Rather, the space was newly modelled according to these women's prerogatives and to comply with their personal outlook and imagination. I will explore how the dressing of rooms can offer a literal domestic stage that presents different aesthetic perspectives without necessarily achieving reconciliation.

The second section, 'Science', explores how engagement with Chinese ideas and objects contributed to an increasingly connected global network of scholars, uniting social arts with scholarly reason. William Jones's works on China and those of Lady and Joseph Banks encouraged a positive relationship between the long-known and newly-discovered, refuting the anxieties of reactionaries such as

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<sup>51</sup> Adam Fitz-Adam (pseud.), Horace Walpole, *The World* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1753), p. 71.

Shebbeare. They contributed to the modernisation of scholarly approaches to literature, science and manufactured goods.

Jones sought to produce knowledge in a new centre of learning, India, away from British institutions, which repositioned China in his cultural and intellectual framework. In adopting this new position, Jones had a mantle thrust upon him: that of 'Oriental' or 'Asiatick'. By comparison, the Banks's porcelain dairy re-imagined the aristocratic porcelain dairy as a site of research, of social arts and a synthesis of male and female collecting practices through the creation of a complementary text with which to accompany the porcelain dairy. Lady Banks's collection of porcelain also furthers eighteenth-century debates of aesthetic value versus that of authenticity.

The final section, 'Satire', reveals how Peter Pindar inherits a deceptive Chinese mantle from his literary predecessor William Chambers, who pretended to be Tan Chet-Qua in *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1773). Both satirical approaches offer a new form of criticism of taste, politics and society, including the imagined voicing of the Emperor. I will also examine the way in which ventriloquised texts possess a dialogic exchange with an invented Chinese persona and the way in which they stage different points of view without necessarily reconciling them.

The Chinese man Whang Atong is a recurrent point of reference amongst his contemporaries for ideas and information on the Oriental subject and receives similar frequent reference in this thesis. In a similar manner, I return to Oliver Goldsmith's *A Citizen of the World* (1760) throughout the sections in the analysis of adopting a Chinese mantle. As a writer who lived by his work, Goldsmith was driven commercially by the same fashion for the Chinese taste that he mocks in his narrative. Goldsmith's text serves as a record of imagined and real responses to China and the Chinese, and gives a popular representation of attitudes to the London-based British interest in the foreign land. As such, his text offers a contrast between the literary and actual representations of adoptions of a Chinese mantle.

This thesis examines some of the contradictions and complexities of responses to China in England, focusing on a particular method of accommodation or appropriation in creative and scholarly responses to China: the adoption of a Chinese mantle, literal and figurative, in which Occidental agents construct Chineseness about themselves or their work in a process of producing and disseminating knowledge that was fragmented, playful, imperfect and multifarious, but also capable of being enlightening and thus contributed to the evolution of material and literary culture in the long eighteenth century.

# Home

## Introduction

### Dressing up as Chinese: Rooms, Bodies, Women and China

It is impossible to reduce to simple reason a subject which has been so adulterated & sophisticated by custom, fashions, superstitions &c as that of ornament.

Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, 13 April 1767<sup>1</sup>

Decoration of the home was an acceptable female activity, yet the home became a contested site that was imbued with meaning: the home was both a microcosm of the wider society and a refuge from it; public and private spaces existed, shaped by levels of access and by scales of intimacy and familiarity; women belonged in the home, but this belonging was predicated upon a firmly coded set of correct behaviours. Chinese goods were thus being imported into a domestic realm that has been identified as an ideological minefield. Divisions between male and female roles between the working and domestic arenas have been challenged by Karen Harvey, who argues against the idea that there was a matriarchal dominance of the home. Instead, she has found that men had a clear and authoritative role in the running of the household, and women had to submit and conform to these expectations.<sup>2</sup> Harvey's research raises questions about the extent of this freedom to design and decorate, which colours Tita Chico's argument that dressing rooms and bedrooms were intimate spaces for female expression and intellectual and imaginative freedom.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Henry Home, Lord Kames, 13 April 1767, 'Correspondence Between Lord Kames and Mrs Montagu', in *Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review*, 5 (1808): 150-153 (p. 151).

<sup>2</sup> Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Tita Chico, *Designing Women: the Dressing Room in Eighteenth-century English Literature and Culture* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005).

It suggests that where creative freedom for women existed, it was limited to spaces that were already considered female.

Mathew Johnson argues that building a house was an ideological act in itself, creating and confirming hierarchies and relationships between craftsmen and consumers and linking the 'closing culture', the stricter delineation and compartmentalisation of space that emerged during the early modern period, with the evolution of capitalism.<sup>4</sup> Johnson also points out that regarding houses as 'a monolithic culturally disembodied message about an ideology or world-view' is unhelpful, as 'houses are built and rebuilt by individual, ordinary men and women, who have their own view of the world'.<sup>5</sup> Use of Chinese decoration invites thought about the interaction between the global and the domestic, a relationship affected by the breaking and re-shaping of boundaries. Heterogeneity in house-building and decorating are expressions of identity and individualism that can react with or against fashion and conformity.

David Porter has suggested that the domestic repository for the Chinese taste 'could only be classed with the theatre and the urban pleasure garden as a site of renegade, licentious desires and delights, improper entertainments privileging spectacle and sensuality over moral integrity and substance'.<sup>6</sup> Spectacle and the importation of the delights of public spaces into the private realm may confer some of the same inflections of immorality and insubstantiality. Still, the potential for women to possess creative freedom and assertiveness was a proscribed one, limiting them to acceptable spaces for alteration.<sup>7</sup> As Chico observes, 'The dressing room offers a stage of representation that marks a boundary that is forever susceptible to violation.'

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<sup>4</sup> Mathew Johnson, *Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape* (London: University College London Press, 1993), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> See Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1987).

That boundary, the line of the dressing room door, is, in fact, defined through violation'.<sup>8</sup> In this instance, if a woman polices the objects entering her space, it represents her skill in more generally policing access to what Chico calls 'her private parts – [her] rooms, [her] belongings, [her] behaviours [which] are all seen as metonymies for [her body]'.<sup>9</sup>

The adoption, in the most intimate of domestic spaces, of a foreign aesthetic such as the Chinese taste, resulted in eighteenth-century women playing with and attempting to negotiate the opposition between female constraint, limitation and vulnerability and the increasing possibility presented by the rest of the world.<sup>10</sup> In order to achieve this exotic look, women were able to communicate beyond the physical limits of the home, facilitating discussion and exchange of objects and ideas between women and between men and women. Women could also communicate outside of their class, as they could deal with designers, shopkeepers and tradespeople. The study of particular cases in which women have chosen to decorate their personal spaces in an Oriental style reveals some of the ways in which the adoption of a foreign aesthetic complicates the binding force of the domestic. The Chinese aesthetic simultaneously iterated and obliterated boundaries of the domestic realm as the interior was the realm of the woman, but was also defined by a global aesthetic. This globalism was often reflected in a compilation of oriental styles that originated from India, Persia, Turkey and China, which were juxtaposed against or blended with French and English modes. The natural advantage gained by men in understanding original Latin and Greek texts and in touring around continental Europe in order to become experts on the neo-classical had no bearing on the Chinese taste and so the taste facilitated an intellectual and imaginative emancipation from male authority.

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<sup>8</sup> Chico, *Dressing Rooms*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 281.



The Chinoiserie interiors created by women in the eighteenth century provided a space in which women could engage in imaginative possibility, as well as a female-dominated aesthetic that gave agency to its arbiters.<sup>11</sup> Few men visited the eastern Empire and only a tiny handful could read the language. The majority of those who did visit China were merchants or Jesuits: people who could be challenged as authorities on a subject. Even when Jesuits were considered learned, their views could be disregarded as distorted by a Franco-Catholic agenda.

When elite women began to travel in increasing numbers to the Continent, particularly in the late 1760s and 1770s, it corresponded with a declining interest in the Chinese aesthetic.<sup>12</sup> Brian Dolan argues that Europe ‘was a fantasy, an “imaginative geography” represented in landscape paintings, narrated in books or described in letters’ and that the ‘imagination [that was] needed to fill in the empty spaces of knowledge, sometimes leading to fanciful projections of reality’ were partly resolved by women travelling to see the subjects of the fantasy.<sup>13</sup> Those who began to travel to Europe in the 1760s and 1770s immersed themselves in the delights of the Grand Tour. As Hester Piozzi exclaimed in 1785, ‘Oh, there is no Comparison between one’s Sensations at home and those one feels at Naples’.<sup>14</sup>

In the same way, China offered imaginative possibility, with the difference that there was no possibility of reconciling the fantasy with reality.

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<sup>11</sup> David Porter points to the intersection of ‘imaginative possibilities’ derived from the ‘sorts of book these elite English women were reading in their porcelain-bedecked libraries and bedrooms’. *Chinese Taste*, p. 65. Porter primarily focuses on the period 1660 to 1760 and explores the direct relationship between scenes of homosocial femininity depicted on Chinese porcelain and the ‘feminocentric Utopianism’ of writers such as Katherine Philips, Lady Mary Chudleigh, Jane Barker and Anne Finch (p. 67).

<sup>12</sup> Hester Piozzi to Samuel Lysons, 31 December 1785, quoted in Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour: British Women in Pursuit of Enlightenment and Adventure in Eighteenth-Century* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p. 7. Dolan notes that women travelling to the continent generated great anxiety amongst male critics and helped to ensure that the number of women travelling to the continent was a mere fraction of the quantity of men who took part in the Grand Tour. He too emphasises the socio-cultural expectation that women ‘were not expected to stray from their home’ (ibid.).

<sup>13</sup> Dolan, pp. 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> Hester Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters*, I, p. 176, quoted in Dolan, p. 17.

For those unable to travel and for those yet to travel, the Chinese taste offered fashionable conformity and, at the same time, distinction from the other aesthetic forms, such as the neo-classical, due to the Chinese aesthetic's associations with an effeminacy and alien strangeness that mark it as 'other'.<sup>15</sup> For women such as Elizabeth Montagu, who was educated in the classics, the anti-classical association of the Chinese aesthetic was also troubling.<sup>16</sup> Chinese objects and fashions lacked the associated history and culture of the neo-classical and so were tinged with the sense that educated women should know better than to be tempted by its frivolity and insubstantiality.

The charge of wanton fashionability was made towards British women by contemporary commentators in the eighteenth century, setting up an almost entirely pejorative relationship between the feminine, femininity and Chinese production.<sup>17</sup> The belief in the Chinese taste as feminine was reinforced by the literature of the time. In 1737, Lord Shaftesbury had expressed a delight in the perceived effeminate East, declaring, 'Effeminacy pleases me. The Indian figures, the Japan work, the enamel strokes my eye. The luscious colours and glossy paint gain upon my fancy'.<sup>18</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century the word 'effeminacy' had changed its meaning. Having once meant being woman-like whilst at the same time being attracted to women, the linking of fops and effeminacy to transgression changed male commentators' attitudes to light-hearted taste; a sexual threat emerged in a taste now characterised as popular with women and sexually suspicious men.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Whilst there are notable examples of men indulging in this taste, such as Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill and the Prince Regent at Brighton Pavilion, and, it is interesting to note, both are associated with effeminacy, their gender nonetheless exempts them from the particular relationship with the interior that was expected in women.

<sup>16</sup> Montagu studied works by Sophocles after attending a ball; Lady Holland recorded, in 1798, a list of classical works that she had read, which included Juvenal. Dolan, 39, 41.

<sup>17</sup> An explicit relationship between pejorative luxury and the Oriental woman is identified by Ros Ballaster in 'Performing Roxane: The Oriental Woman as the Sign of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century Fictions', *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, eds. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols (London: James Purser, 1737), I, p. 341.

<sup>19</sup> Elaine McGirr, *Eighteenth-Century Characters: A Guide to the Literature of the Age*

As Yang has suggested, mid-century critics of luxury associated the Chinese aesthetic with a 'contagious effeminacy'.<sup>20</sup>

The association between women, the Chinese aesthetic and sexuality is reflected in and reinforced by the fact that such a large number of rooms dedicated to the Chinese aesthetic in great houses were either bedrooms or dressing rooms: for example, the Chinese Bedroom at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire; Badminton House, Gloucestershire; Harewood House, Yorkshire; and Belton House, Lincolnshire. Yet, Lorna Weatherill's study of inventories shows that there existed near equal distribution of porcelain collections amongst both genders, and one of the most infamous displays of the Chinese taste was by Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill; but women were the ones derogated for their sense of fashion and taste for Chinese decoration.<sup>21</sup>

For Oliver Goldsmith, the association between women and the Chinese aesthetic became objects of satire: he lampoons ignorant interest in China in the fourteenth letter of *The Citizen of the World* (1760). The 'lady of distinction' that the Chinese subject of Goldsmith's work, Lien Chi Altangi, meets is 'a little shrivelled figure indolently reclined on a sofa' rather than the hoped for 'bloom of youth and beauty'.<sup>22</sup> Altangi's overactive 'imagination' of 'the conquest [he] had made' is disappointed, which parallels the lady of distinction's imagined vision of what China and being Chinese is.<sup>23</sup> When confronted by reality, she resists it by focusing upon her domestic recreation of China.

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(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Chi-Ming Yang, *Performing China: Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-Century England, 1660-1760* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 151.

<sup>21</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *The Growth of the Pottery Industry in England, 1660-1815* (London: Garland, 1986). Chi-ming Yang, *Performing China*, p. 151, A strong association had been formed between the Chinese aesthetic, dressing rooms and sexual transgression: Barbara Benedict has described as 'masturbatory' the anonymous *A Court Lady's Curiosity; or the Virgin Undress'd* (1741), which depicts an Italian Jesuit missionary spying from inside a China vessel on a Chinese woman at her toilette, which involves her looking at her own body with a mirror.

<sup>22</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World*, 2 vols (1760; London, J. and R. Childs, 1820), I, p. 68. All further quotations from this edition.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

In an ironic inversion of male-subject, female-object roles, Altangi believes he is going to conquer a delightful and assumed typically passive woman causing his ‘vanity [to be] raised at such an invitation; [he] flattered [himself] that she had seen [him] in some public place, and had conceived an affection for [his] person, which thus induced her to deviate from the usual decorums of the sex’.<sup>24</sup>

There is double meaning in conquest, aligning sexual and territorial acquisition, both of which have been denied to Altangi through the lady’s post-menopausal status. He is a thwarted invader, reduced ‘to act the disciple than the instructor’, simultaneously mocking the virago-like woman and the feebleness of Altangi. Altangi exhibits reason and realises his error eventually, as he ‘was afterwards informed [that] was the lady herself, a woman equally distinguished for rank, politeness, taste, and understanding’, but he finds that it is ‘vain to contradict the lady in anything she thought fit to advance’.<sup>25</sup> The irony is that Altangi is the creation of an Englishman, as much an adoption of a mantle as the ‘lady of distinction’s’ decision to dress her rooms in the Chinese style as ‘she took [Altangi] through several rooms all furnished, as she told [Altangi], in the Chinese manner; sprawling dragons, squatting pagods, and clumsy mandarines, were stuck upon every shelf: in turning round, one must have used caution not to demolish a part of the precarious furniture’.<sup>26</sup>

Altangi does not belong in this artificial environment; he is physically out of place. This emphasises the lady’s failure to recreate an authentic Chinese style. Furthermore, as Goldsmith’s adoption of the Chinese mantle is sufficiently transparent, the Chinese figure becomes a version of the everyman: Altangi counters the virago’s determination to decorate as she chooses by revealing her ignorance, lack of judgement and the out-of-placeness of a man in a female-dominated environment. The lady judges identity by dress, falsely, revealing the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

arbitrariness of the signification of dress.<sup>27</sup> As Altangi ‘was dressed after the fashion of Europe, she had taken [him] for an Englishman’, upon which she declared that she ‘would give the world to see him in his own country’s dress’.<sup>28</sup> She desires him to perform as Chinese, to eat with chopsticks, enamoured with his ‘somethingness’ and thus revealing her inarticulacy. Worse, she demonstrates some sexual attraction as she is ‘charmed with the outlandish cut of his face!’ and declares ‘how bewitching the exotic breadth of his forehead’.<sup>29</sup>

The lady’s excitement lies in his foreignness and confirms the fear of female sexual incontinence when beyond the boundaries of home, or when those boundaries are breached by an invading foreigner. The lady’s failure to recreate the Chinese aesthetic, as her pagoda ‘may not as well be called an Egyptian pyramid as a Chinese temple’ and her display of ‘useless’ objects which once had a purpose in China cast the problematic Chinese aesthetic as one that is the product of female failure rather than the explicit danger of the foreign. Even the sexual threat represented by Altangi is quickly inverted to become the danger of the lady’s lasciviousness. Finally, Altangi departs, ‘tired of acting with dissimulation’.<sup>30</sup> The irony is that the entire text is a dissimulation, a disguise or concealment under a false appearance. It condemns lightly his own hypocrisy in going along with the woman’s ideas of China, but it condemns more strongly female dissimulation: the fakeness of her authority is reflected in the artificiality and wrongness of her décor.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Altangi’s misreading of prostitutes that he meets on the street as fine ladies demonstrates the dangers of the illegibility of dress. He takes the advice of a London native, the ‘man in black’, and so becomes aware of his error, unlike the lady of distinction who resists expert native advice.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>31</sup> Marmontel’s *The Bad Mother, A Moral Tale* (1781; this edn. London: John Hunt & Carew Raynell, 1807), pp. 106-121, presents as particularly threatening this imaginative possibility that women could explore through the Chinese taste. Marmontel declares that ‘among the monstrous productions of nature, may be reckoned the heart of a mother who loves one of her children to the exclusion of all the rest’ (106). Her favourite son is destroyed by his Middle-eastern lover, Fatima, who manipulates him via the power of her dangerous imagination: she dreams of a room in which ‘sofas suited to this superb bed; pannels dazzling with gold, polished cabinets, porcelaine of Japan, China monkies, the

Thus, the domestic sphere represents a site of tension, a locale to which women must belong, but one which could be ruptured and spoiled.

Although women were perceived as having a significant position within the domestic sphere, men had roles in as well as beyond the domestic. The imaginative freedom for women in the face of geographical constraint, and the freedom of men to enter and exit space freely, is articulated in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). Edward addresses Fanny:

Dear Fanny, I will not interrupt you any longer. You want to be reading. But I could not be easy till I had spoken to you, and come to a decision. Sleeping or waking, my head has been full of this matter all night. It is an evil, but I am certainly making it less than it might be. You, in the meanwhile, will be taking a trip into China, I suppose. How does Lord Macartney go on?'—opening a volume on the table and then taking up some others. 'And here are Crabbe's Tales, and the Idler, at hand to relieve you, if you tire of your great book'.<sup>32</sup>

Referring to Lord Macartney's account of his Embassy to China, Austen ironises Fanny's possession of the barren and sparsely furnished 'East room'. Secondly, the intertextual reference to the *Idler* includes letter number 97, 'Narratives of travellers considered', published on 23 February 1760, in which Johnson notes that 'Few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travellers', as

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prettiest in the world [...] I am sure, Sir, something very extraordinary will happen to me.' It reveals a fear not only of the threatening nature of female fantasy but also that it could result in action and excitement for women: something 'extraordinary will happen to [her]' (p. 113). The other son, Jemmy, travels west to the Americas, where he meets a woman with 'the stature and gait of one of Diana's nymphs; the smile and look of the companions of Venus [...] endowed with that greatness of spirit, that loftiness of temper, that justness in her ideas, that rectitude in her sentiments, which makes us say [...] that such a woman has the soul of a man' (p. 116). Reason and good sense, associated with western classical forms, are in opposition to fancy and imagination, which are associated with eastern charms; the latter deleterious to the wealth and well-being of man and home.

<sup>32</sup> Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 3 vols (London: T. Egerton, 1814), I, p. 326.

the writers are either too broad in their description, or focus too much upon the banal. Johnson issues the following caveat to the arm-chair traveller: 'He that reads these books must consider his labour as its own reward; for he will find nothing on which attention can fix, or which memory can retain.'<sup>33</sup> It marks the limitations of women and how small their worlds are within a woman's 'little establishment' and how men are able to 'interrupt' and 'admire [...] [the space] exceedingly' without having to stay.<sup>34</sup>

Edward brings the problems of the external world, unasked, into the room, so he assumes inaccurately that he removes them 'as soon as [he is] gone, [for then she] will empty [her] head of all this nonsense of acting, and sit comfortably down to [her] table'.<sup>35</sup> Fanny's silence in response to the stream of consciousness Edward pours forth demonstrates that she is a passive vessel available to receive his anxieties; her lack of presence is heightened by her imaginative travels that detach her further from the breakfast table and the family, contrasting with the rest 'all [being] in high good-humour' and fooling around 'together with such unanimity'.<sup>36</sup> She is a woman who is assumed to be elsewhere and distant, yet the inadequacy of imaginative travels is marked not only by the reference to the *Idler* but also more explicitly as the narrative continues upon Edward's departure:

But there was no reading, no China, no composure for Fanny.  
He had told her the most extraordinary, the most inconceivable,  
the most unwelcome news; and she could think of nothing else.  
To be acting! After all his objections—objections so just and so  
public! After all that she had heard him say, and seen him look,  
and known him to be feeling. Could it be possible? Edmund so  
inconsistent! Was he not deceiving himself? Was he not wrong?

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<sup>33</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL. D.: with an Essay on his Life and Genius*, 2 vols (London: G. Dearborn, 1836), I, p. 449.

<sup>34</sup> Austen, *Mansfield Park*, I, p. 327.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

Alas! it was all Miss Crawford's doing. She had seen her influence in every speech, and was miserable.<sup>37</sup>

Kenneth L. Moler labels the East room 'the most prominent metaphor expressive of Fanny's spiritual distance from the Mansfield world'.<sup>38</sup>

The geography of distance and an alternative philosophy of the room in the east, far away up the narrow stairs.

In contrast to the easy public nature of Montagu's room, Fanny sought 'the solitude of the east room, without being seen or missed'. In it, she kept 'in some favourite box in the east room which held all her smaller treasures', whilst 'its greatest elegancies and ornaments were a faded footstool [...] too ill done for the drawing-room, three transparencies [...] A collection of family profiles, thought unworthy of being any where else [...] and [...] a small sketch of a ship sent [...] by William'.<sup>39</sup> This personal simplicity contrasts with the plethora of anonymous foreign goods that overwhelmed Goldsmith's lady of distinction's home.

Fanny disengages from excessive ornamentation: her only decorations are either personal or rejected by the rest of the household as inadequate for public display. Still, the description of Fanny's room as 'a nest of comforts' (p. 318) does evoke Elizabeth Montagu's desire to arrive in the 'perfect peace and safety at Hill Street', which demonstrates that although there are different attitudes to aesthetic theory, there is a popular appeal in retreating to a room of one's own.<sup>40</sup> As the historian John Tosh remarks, 'Men operated at will in *both* spheres; that was their privilege'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth L. Moler, 'Miss Price All Alone: Metaphors of Distance in *Mansfield Park*', *Studies in the Novel*, 17 (Summer 1985): 189-193 (p. 190).

<sup>39</sup> Austen, *Mansfield Park*, I, p. 318.

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Montagu, *The Queen of the Blue-stockings: her Correspondence from 1720 to 1761*, ed. by Emily Climenson, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1906), I, p. 274.

<sup>41</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays On Gender, Family, And Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 71.



Karen Harvey argues that straightforward patriarchal domination theory was an ideal model of masculinity based on the idea of house-as-microcosm, rather than an everyday reality. Instead, she accounts for the idea that women were to a greater or lesser degree subordinate or at least in distinctly separate roles from those of men and that images of virility and authority remained essential aspects of a discourse of domestic masculinity.<sup>42</sup> Harvey's introduction sets out that she is not seeking to 'portray [men] as hapless victims or uncomfortable interlopers in the foreign land of the home'.<sup>43</sup> Whilst it is clear that men had an authoritative role within the home, the space of the woman's dressing room was an alien setting, made more so when dressed in an exotic aesthetic. An obsession with what went on in the spaces is reflected in the number of images, satirical prints and poems that addressed the imagined occurrences within dressing rooms.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* details the evolution of the meaning signified by 'toilette' or 'toilet': the 'articles required or used in dressing' (1662); the 'action or process of dressing' (1681); the cloth on the table (1682); the table at which the lady sat (1695). Its final shift in meaning emerges in 1703, when it embraces the 'reception of visitors by a lady during the concluding stages of her toilet'. This complicating of the public and private is emphasised in eighteenth-century images depicting 'the toilet' or 'toilette'. In 'Morning' by Nicholas Lancret (1739), a woman is shown entertaining her spiritual guide, serving him tea, whilst being in a state of partial dress, exposes that which is private – her flesh – in an exchange with someone from outside of the domestic sphere.<sup>44</sup>

Hogarth's satirical print 'The Toilette', from his series *Marriage A La Mode*, depicts eleven people in the room whilst the lady dresses, including a tradesman, a

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<sup>42</sup> See also Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Harvey, *The Little Republic*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> See appendix for image (p. 299).

boy of Asian and a man of African descent.<sup>45</sup> The men outnumber the two women, but are coded as sexually ambiguous: the effete fop, hairdresser, musician and possible eunuch lack direct sexual threat, but nonetheless are asocial in their roles as not-quite-men; the women are cast in louche, masculine positions and they dominate the room and the heart of the picture. The sexual roles have been blurred. The women dominant and the men pushed to the side, emasculated: the arena of the dressing room becomes a place of perverse between-ness, much as it was a site of liminality between public and private. Montagu's toilette service marks the presence of intimate functions, whilst hiding them: a necessity, as Montagu describes to her husband how upon 23 December 1752, 'the Chinese-room was filled by a succession of people from eleven in the morning till eleven at night', confirming the space as one that is a combination of private and public.

The depictions of the teeming toilette contrast with the intimacy of a print for Robert Sayer, published in approximately 1770, which shows a demure lady tending her hair, with a hand clasped to her breast to ensure that her well-dressed body is under control, in contrast to the sexual exposure of Lancet's figure and her lack of control of her body and clothes.<sup>46</sup> The delicacy and respectability of this image are rarer than the licentious prints that tended to expose women in a state of undress or engaged in intimate washing. The anonymous print 'The morning tast; or Fanny M-'s maid washing her toes' presents the prostitute Fanny Murray in more typical fashion. A wanton disregard for restricting public access to an intimate event highlights the permeability of the public-private border, its undesirability and threat, by using the trope of the prostitute and other similarly sexually unrestrained women.<sup>47</sup> By adopting a foreign aesthetic, a woman could shape her own particular space as foreign and mysterious to outside invaders, including her husband.

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<sup>45</sup> See appendix for image (p. 300).

<sup>46</sup> See appendix (p. 301).

<sup>47</sup> See appendix (p. 302). The life of Fanny Murray is recorded in Horace Bleackley's *Ladies Fair and Frail: Sketches of the Demi-monde during the Eighteenth Century* (London: J. Lane, 1909).

The collapsing of difference between foreign and British women at the same time as complicating the boundary between the interior and exterior is embodied in the detail of a lady's fan, showing a woman at her toilet with attendants, children, monkeys, and a dog, whilst a man enters through a door at right.<sup>48</sup> The French design depicts conspicuously European women, fair-skinned and some fair-haired, who are dressed in a European manner. The room in which they are sitting is Chinese in style: red fretwork, porcelain-bedecked and the presence of the monkey all serve as a metonym for foreign exoticness. The metonymy functions as a contained representation of foreignness, which ornaments what is, at the core, a European vision of toilette. The scene is defined by a restrained coexistence, even between exterior and interior and nature and refinement, as the border between outside and inside are broken by the ambiguous representation of nature. The door into the room suggests the women are within an interior, but the walls seem to have been replaced by verdant growth and the wall-less frontage shows wide steps down into the earth planted with trees. The room is literally without boundaries and encapsulates exactly the dualism of public and private space which women experienced in the dressing room.

Fans in themselves represent a blurring of boundaries, as they personalised a woman's appearance at the same time as having the potential to politicise her space, as women could use fans to communicate views and opinions as well as taste, including political ones.<sup>49</sup> A woman could simultaneously broadcast her views and invite gazing upon herself without being wholly seen: she could be in control of the viewpoint projected on the fan as well as how much of a view of her face people could glean.

In marriages in which men were authority figures but had a relationship in which the division of labour ensured co-dependency for the completion of all household tasks, husbands and wives negotiated on the adoption of a foreign aesthetic.

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<sup>48</sup> See appendix (p. 303).

<sup>49</sup> This view is put forward by Tiffany Potter in *Women, Popular Culture, and the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), who analyses the use of explicitly political images on fans, such as revealing a woman's political allegiance or patriotism (p. 100).

This accounts for the proliferation of Chinese bedrooms and dressing rooms, private spaces that are associated with illicit activity and thus suit an illegitimate aesthetic; at the same time, their separation from more male-dominated public spaces, such as the dining room, suggests that a husband could tolerate the aesthetic in separate spheres. Still, it raises the question of how an eighteenth-century woman views her role as interior decorator: was she gilding her own cage by creating her own interior fantasy in the only space that was deemed hers, or was she exerting her authority and creativity, independent of male-orientated neo-classical styles? Or, indeed, could both states of being exist simultaneously?

This view of female entrenchment in the home did not diminish throughout the eighteenth century. The proverbial subsumption of woman and home, and the rightness of her employment in the decoration and management of it, create a semantic tie between woman and home which presents the house as a gilded cage; the home confines a woman's thoughts as well as her body. Proverbs sublimate the identity of woman and house, relating the state and propriety of the house literally or metaphorically to the morality of its female occupier: John Ray's explanation of the phrase 'Bare walls make giddy housewives' concludes that 'unless housewives, [women] have nothing where about to busy themselves, and show their good house-wifery'.<sup>50</sup>

The term house-wife evokes a semantic bind between house and woman in which women have certain duties to perform within the house, particularly in terms of having things within the home with which to engage. The potential of things within the home to occupy and assist in the regulation of the housewife's movement, enticing her to stay indoors rather than imprisoning her, is articulated in Ray's succeeding explanatory note:

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<sup>50</sup> John Ray, *A Compleat Collection of English Proverbs: Also the Most Celebrated Proverbs of the Scotch, Italian, French, Spanish, and Other Languages. The Whole Methodically Digested and Illustrated with Annotations, and Proper Explanations* (1695; 4th edn., London: W. Otridge, S. Bladon, 1768).

We speak this in excuse of the good woman, who doth [...] gad abroad a little too much, or that is blamed for not giving the entertainment that is expected, or not behaving herself as other matrons do. She hath nothing to work upon at home; she is disconsolate, and therefore seeketh to divert herself abroad: she is inclined to be virtuous, but discomposed through poverty. Parallel to this I take [...] Vuides chambers font les dames folles [...] Empty chambers make women play the wantons.<sup>51</sup>

Ray posits that women are essentially good, but they need to be able to perform the functions of wealth: decorating and managing a sufficiently substantial home, in order to protect them from seeking satisfaction from foreign quarters. According to proverbial opinion, 'A Woman is to be from her House three times: when she is Christened, Married and Buried' (304). From the same collection, other proverbs collapse the boundary between the domestic and the female: one can be employed to read the other. The subsumption of woman and home is evidenced in proverbs that equate women to furniture and ornaments: 'A virtuous Woman, tho ugly, is the Ornament of the house' and 'A fair wife without a fortune, is a fine house without furniture'.<sup>52</sup>

Engagements beyond the domestic sphere were associated with danger, whether travelling geographically, or expanding horizons beyond the domestic in professional arenas, coupled with the double meaning between women going abroad and female sexual incontinence.<sup>53</sup> Resistance to house-wifery is represented in the engraving 'I'll tell you what!', which satirises the playwright Elizabeth Inchbald's unusual and dangerous solitude.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 302; 285.

<sup>53</sup> Barbara Hodgson, *No Place for a Lady: Tales of Adventurous Women Travelers*. (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2002). See also, for example, Unknown artist, *I'll Tell You What!* (London: E. Jackson, 1790), stipple engraving, New York Public Library, New York. <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/biblion/outsidere/image/0-nypl-771> [Accessed 16 April 2011].

The edition of *Moll Flanders*, the peripatetic prostitute, and the globe standing behind the carelessly dressed and anguished looking figure of Inchbald signify her travelling beyond the boundary of acceptable, married domesticity. The slovenliness of the room demarcates her failure as a house-wife; furthermore, Inchbald fails as a domestic ornament in her unattractive lack of physical and verbal containment.

Detractors occurred during the eighteenth century, yet even those calling for female education argued from the position of improving women's domestic position. Nevertheless, the entrenched verbal association between woman and home ensured that the universal 'truth' for most women was one defined by limited access to the wider world or worldly pleasures, in which going 'abroad' merely meant leaving her home. Women were nearly wholly excluded from the exploration of the world and interaction with other cultures; interacting with too distant a neighbour was fraught with danger. One way to participate, though, was to import the delights of abroad into the home.

The ideology and practice of ornamentation extends beyond the judicious decoration of the house to include body, dress, and language. Ornament was a marker of civility and civilisation; of refinement, good taste and judgement. A doctrine of verbal ornamentation reveals the way in which genteel society placed emphasis on performing correctly and adopting the appropriate mantle for social interaction. 'The sayings of wise men, allusions of the ancient poets, the customs of countries, and manners of mankind, [are] adapted to common use, as ornaments of speech, rules of instruction, arguments of wisdom, and maxims of undeniable truth'.<sup>54</sup> Ornamentation, coupled with codes of correct display, neither too excessive nor too sparse, is applicable to speech, body and space and synthesises an eighteenth-century social ideology of ornamentation through these three types or locales of performativity. A stricter ideology of ornamentation emerged, paralleling attitudes to material culture.

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<sup>54</sup> 'Preface to the fourth edition', *Ray's Proverbs* (1768), p. xxii.

The editor of fourth edition not only points to the proverbs' perceived essentialism and their importance as a discursive tool, but also expands the frame of reference for theories of taste and ornamentation: one can display material taste and discernment, as well as verbalise or articulate with taste and decorative ability in a manner that demonstrates or reveals civility, acculturation and sophistication.<sup>55</sup>

[Proverbs] are not to be used as meat, but sauce, or seasoning; not to clog, but adorn. The too frequent use and repetition of them beget a distaste, and therefore they ought to be introduced only at proper times and places; for when impertinently applied they are not only disgusting, but even darken one another.<sup>56</sup>

Ironically, by identifying a parallel between good taste and food-taste, the editor debases the ornamental quality of proverbs and reveals the common acculturation of a mode of ornamentation about which poets such as Pope had expressed anxiety. As Jennie Batchelor observes, Pope, in his *Essay on Criticism*, identifies a parallel between dressing speech and dressing the body appropriately, as 'expression is the Dress of Thought, and still / Appears more decent as more suitable; / A vile Conceit in pompous Words exprest, / Is like a Clown in regal Purple drest'.<sup>57</sup> Unlike true wit, ill-spoken words, and adopted or learned rhetorical technique, the pompous epithet is like masquerade: dystopic and unsettling, representing the incivility of carnival.

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<sup>55</sup> For discussion of proverbs and their role as markers of and as subject to cultural and social attitudes or beliefs, see James Obelkevich, 'Proverbs and Social History', ed. by Peter Burke and Roy Porter, *The Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>56</sup> In 1761, Thomas Percy published 'A Collection of Chinese Proverbs and Apothegms' in *Hau Kiou Choaan Or the Pleasing History: A Translation from the Chinese Language, to which are Added, I. The Argument Or Story of a Chinese Play, II. A Collection of Chinese Proverbs, and III. Fragments of Chinese Poetry*, 3 vols (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), III. For a discussion of Percy's attitude to the proverbs and issues of Chinese ingenuity and sageness, see Porter, *The Chinese Taste*, pp.164-168.

<sup>57</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (London: W. Lewis, 1711), p. 20, quoted in Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 4. Further references from this edition.

Half a century later, Oliver Goldsmith retains a similar and more literal suspicion of dress and class as Altangi reports:

The man in black, who is a professed enemy to this manner of ornamenting the tail, assures me, there are numberless inconveniences attending it, and that a lady, dressed up to the fashion, is as much a cripple as any in Nankin. But his chief indignation is levelled at those who dress in this manner, without a proper fortune to support it [...] who, without any other pretensions, fancied they became ladies, merely from the addition of three superfluous yards of ragged silk.<sup>58</sup>

The ability to choose the appropriate dress of body, speech and space is founded on class and hierarchy; the striving, emerging middle-classes depended on instruction manuals and books of proverbs that were disregarded by the cultural elite. One of Pope's contemporaries, the grammarian William Baker, shared Pope's view of the parallel between dress of body and of language, but framed it in a nationalist discourse aimed at advancing those who attended grammar schools, embracing heartily the learned rules and behaviours that civilise and elevate the person:

I heartily wish, I could see some *abler Pen* imploy'd this Way, for I am of Opinion, and am very well satisfied, that there is Room enough still left (notwithstanding the useful Treatises published) for an *English Education*; that so *English* Readers, and Learners, might be led, by easie *Rules* and *Examples*, into a thorough Acquaintance of their own Language, without obliging them (for the Understanding thereof) to acquire the *Roman*, or any other Foreign Tongue; for I am well persuaded that the *genuine Idioms* and *natural Dress* of our own *Language*, - may be attained without the *Latin* or any other *Foreign Speech*, whatsoever.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World* (1760; London, J. and R. Childs, 1820), p.112.

<sup>59</sup> William Baker, *Rules for True Spelling and Writing English* (London, 1724), p. x.



The competing views discriminate between natural civility and learned or adopted behaviours, thus distinguishing between the established and aspiring classes in a manner still recognisable in modern Britain.<sup>60</sup>

By 1788, Lord Kames had advanced the debate, still acknowledging the dressing of language, but with an emphasis on congruency as he argues that ‘language ought to correspond to the subject: heroic actions or sentiments require elevated language; tender sentiments ought to be expressed in words soft and flowing; and plain language void of ornament, is adapted to subjects grave and didactic’.<sup>61</sup> Kames also links the dressing up language with dressing the body, paraphrasing Pope:

Language may be considered as the dress of thought; and where the one is not suited to the other, we are sensible of incongruity, in the same manner as where a judge is dressed like a fop, or a peasant like a man of quality. Where the impression made by the words resembles the impression made by the thought, the similar emotions mix sweetly in the mind, and double the pleasure; but where the impressions made by the thought and the words are dissimilar, *the unnatural union* they are forced into is disagreeable.<sup>62</sup>

This, then, is one of the challenges of adopting a Chinese mantle: it is an unnatural union between the dissimilar. Consequently, although the anxiety of choice and selection in dressing or ornamenting body, speech and space affected men and women, it brings an additional level of threat to a woman’s

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<sup>60</sup> For example, see ‘I know my place’, *The Frost Report*, BBC 1, 7 April 1966. For an analysis of twenty-first century social division, see *Social Differences and Divisions*, ed. by Peter Braham and Linda Janes (Oxford: Wiley, 2002).

<sup>61</sup> Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols (London: A. Jamieson, 1788), II, pp. 23-24.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*; my italics.

place within the home.<sup>63</sup>

Hume's *Essays* (1758) identifies the positive outcome of acquisition and ornamentation:

The increase and consumption of all the commodities, which serve to the ornament and pleasure of life, are advantageous to society; because at the same time that they multiply those innocent gratifications to individuals, they are a kind of storehouse of labour, which, in the exigencies of state, may be turned to public service.<sup>64</sup>

However, this positive perspective of ornament was increasingly challenged. A decade later, Elizabeth Montagu identified the problematic nature of the subject of ornament. Batchelor's view echoes Montagu's observation, as Batchelor writes that the language of clothes is often 'arbitrary, its meanings vulnerable to manipulation and misinterpretation'.<sup>65</sup> The adoption of the Chinese aesthetic exacerbated these anxieties, as it challenged customs, invigorated fashion and brought in a new set of superstitions. The Chinese aesthetic introduced or complicated issues of nationhood, luxury, masquerade and, most significantly, taste.

Women had to regulate their desires and interests: as early as 1724, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu asserts in her poem 'Epistle from Mrs Yonge to her husband', 'O're the wide World your pleasures you [men] persue, / The Change is justify'd by something new; / But we must sigh in Silence—and be true'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The intersection between French fashion and interior designs has been explored in Harold Koda and Andrew Botton, *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> David Hume, 'An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals', in *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edition revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

<sup>65</sup> Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire*, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Wortley Montagu, 'Epistle from Mrs. Y— to her Husband. 1724' in *Essays and Poems and Simplicity A Comedy*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

The disparity in freedom of the sexes and the strength of the link between distance, exploration and pleasure exposes the tension between the potential of the exterior world and, by inference, the stultifying nature of the interior.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu makes clear her vision of the differentiation between male freedom and female constraint, and uses the vision of indulgence in pleasure 'o're the wide World' as a metaphor for adultery and worldly pleasures as well as encompassing the male ability to travel and have experiences beyond the domestic sphere.

Her poem was written in reference to the divorce between William and Mary Yonge: Mary's dowry was stripped from her possession, as well as 'the greatest Part of her Fortune [...] and she [was] abandoned by her relations'.<sup>67</sup> The case demonstrates that despite the profound and inescapable bind placed socially, culturally and linguistically on the rightness of the woman's place in the home, there remained a vulnerability and temporariness associated with that place.

Female domestic security was not presumed, but instead predicated on her supplication to a particular code of propriety and sexual restraint. Whilst women were firmly located in and mostly limited to the domestic sphere, this was a sphere of fragility. Women's virginity and honour were associated with the irreparable delicacy of porcelain, as when 'rich China Vessels fal'n from high, / In glittering Dust and painted Fragments lie', so women's status, reputation and belonging in their domestic realm could be placed in jeopardy far too easily.<sup>68</sup> The woman was perceived as an ornament of the home, and as an ornament, she could be broken and discarded like an old, cracked porcelain vase.

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<sup>67</sup> The judicial view was reported in the *Northampton Mercury*, 21 Dec. 1724. Quoted in Isobel Grundy, 'Ovid and Eighteenth-Century Divorce: An Unpublished Poem by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu', *Review of English Studies*, 23 (1972): 417-28 (p.424).

<sup>68</sup> Alexander Pope, 'The Rape of the Lock', in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. by Geoffrey Tillotson, 11 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961-69), III, Canto II.105-106 and Canto III.157-60. See also Aubrey Williams's essay, 'The "Fall" of China and The Rape of the Lock', *Philological Quarterly* 41 (1962): 412-25 and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', 153-167.

The complex relationship between the global and domestic, body, dress and room and the Chinese aesthetic is exemplified in different ways by the following case studies: Elizabeth Montagu, who managed the decoration of her Hill Street home in 1748, with redecoration of the Chinese room in 1767 and Elizabeth Yorke, who was decorating her house Erthig on the border between Wales and Shropshire in the early 1770s. Montagu's Chinese room was a semi-public place which was accessed by invitation only, but those invitations numbered in their hundreds. By contrast, Elizabeth Yorke, nearly invisible to society and to history, created a tiny Chinese room in a corner of her home, physically accessible to no more than two or three full-skirted ladies at a time.<sup>69</sup> The Yorke family was also involved with the lives of their servants and their activities. One servant in particular, Betty, had a privately encouraged pastime: making beautiful decorations for Erthig, including rendering a Chinese pagoda in papier-mâché, gilt and shell-work.

Montagu's Chinese room was a space into which she welcomed her connections from among the luminaries of the eighteenth century. She entertained them alone even before her elderly husband died in 1775. Her letters about the Chinese taste reveal awareness of its status as a feminine fashion, as she considers the strengths and weaknesses of such an association. Yet despite, or perhaps because of, Montagu's careful self-regulation in her negotiation of the public and private, and of her agency as an intellectual and facilitator of intellectual circles, her epitaph records society's perspective of her place within the ideology of ornamentation:

Of Elizabeth Montagu, his wife [...] who, possessing the united advantages Of beauty, wit, judgment, reputation, and riches, And employing her talents most uniformly for the benefit of mankind,

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<sup>69</sup> Despite her husband's involvement in politics and frequent travel to Bath and London, Elizabeth Yorke's lack of presence in society was probably because she spent much of her time in confinement, as she produced a child every twelve to eighteen months until her death after childbirth in 1779. She left behind seven children; six of them were born in London, but Elizabeth was unable to partake in the London season due to the restrictions imposed by pregnancy.

Might be justly deemed an ornament to her sex and country.<sup>70</sup>

Montagu herself suggested a much more neutral and less symbolic epitaph, resisting the decorative role into which she was cast, for she wished that her epitaph would read that she had done neither harm nor good, and only asked oblivion.

By comparison, Elizabeth Yorke moved only in female, unliterary circles within the gentry, unlike her academic husband, whose parliamentary and financial business brought him diverse contacts. Nevertheless, her strength of character, vivacity and humour are displayed in her orchestration of the remodelling, whilst revealing the element of fantasy that was attached to interior design. Her self-deprecating humour that she uses with her husband not only identifies affection but also insecurity. Elizabeth's relationship with her mother-in-law reveals other insecurities: principally, competition between mother-in-law and wife. Secondly, the mother-in-law's female servant, Betty Ratcliffe, became a pawn in a delicate negotiation of roles and status within the family. Betty's security in the domestic space was asserted by creativity, making her popular with her master and thus securing her position; at the same time, her activity was controlled by an anxious dowager mistress, Dorothy Yorke, who, once removed to alternative accommodation after the arrival of her new daughter-in-law, attempted to proscribe the servant Betty's creativity as a way of asserting Dorothy's own remote authority and to reaffirm the social hierarchy.

In these case studies, even when a husband is benevolent, generous and apparently loving, delicacy and a trace of insecurity remain present on the part of the wife. Women had to negotiate and manage the display of their selves and their homes. The doubleness presented by adopting a Chinese mantle(-piece) was a display of agency *and* submission: it was an expression of agency, performing specifically non-masculine taste and knowledge, but also one of submission. The Chinese taste did not encroach on masculine spheres of knowledge and was invariably

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Ball, *An Historical Account of Winchester: With Descriptive Walks* (London: James Robbins, 1818), p.135.

confined to the interior of certain rooms, or to the separate, non-functional spaces of follies. The full Chinese aesthetic was almost never given to predominantly masculine arenas, such as the dining or billiards room.

The following chapter will examine the threatening nature of decorative choices, with the connection between a woman's body and her interior surroundings used as a way of reflecting and reading her person and personality. I will consider the networks of communication that centred on the acquisition and display of both product and knowledge and resulted in a flowing exchange of ideas and opinions between women, and their husbands.

Finally, the rest of the chapter aims to explore more deeply an emerging eighteenth-century theory of ornamentation and the way in which the dressing of bodies and rooms was the articulation of taste, good judgement and civility. Initially, the Chinese aesthetic existed in the hinterland of this triumvirate, challenging, testing and reshaping ideas with a playfulness and subversiveness; however, as the Chinese ornaments lost their alien strangeness and became increasingly sublimated into the vernacular of decoration, they too became foreground as signifiers of taste and judgement.

## Chapter One

### In Full Chinese Pomp:

#### Elizabeth Montagu and the Delineation of Domestic Space

In 1749, Elizabeth Montagu wrote to her cousin, the Rev. Mr Freind:

Sick of Grecian elegance and symmetry, or Gothic grandeur and magnificence, we must all seek the barbarous gaudy gout of the Chinese; and fatheaded Pagods and shaking mandarins bear the prize from the first works of antiquity; and Apollo and Venus must give way to a fat idol with a scone on his head. You will wonder I should condemn the taste I have complied with, but in trifles I shall always conform to the fashion.<sup>71</sup>

As she wrote these words, Montagu had just embarked on a fifteen-year long, troubled flirtation with the Chinese aesthetic, dressing up for balls in Chinese costumes and decorating and redecorating rooms in her Hill Street house in the Chinese style. Montagu appears to be derogating the fashionability of such an aesthetic and the insubstantiality of the Chinese taste itself. Her words reveal a double anxiety: the domestic space was one of ideological conformity, apparently demanding compliance, yet was also trivial and trifling. The appearance of conservative acquiescence to the overwhelming desire to be fashionable is undermined by an essentially unruly aesthetic that disturbs classical forms. Montagu's declaration contains humour and self-deprecation, but she was also highlighting that, despite its flighty insubstantiality, in the mid-eighteenth century, the new Chinese aesthetic had nonetheless usurped the old order. By 1760, Montagu's sense of anxiety about the aesthetic value of the Chinese taste was growing: her reasons for adopting it, novelty, exclusivity and in admiration for the French *salonnières*, had dissipated.

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<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Rev. William Friend, [undated] 1749, quoted in Ethel Rolt-Wheeler, *Famous Blue-Stockings* (New York: John Lane Company, 1910), pp. 51-52.

Indeed, in 1765, Montagu ordered the refashioning of her apartments in order to soften the impact of the Chinese taste. Her growing reputation for taste and judgment, in addition to her increasing social status, ultimately led to a dissertation on ornamentation, written in 1767, in which she formalised her thinking about relationships between utility and beauty, as well as the significance of context and the generation of meaning. Although she ultimately rejected the Chinese taste as insubstantial in contrast to Hellenic forms, her arrival at her sophisticated theory of ornamentation was formed by her adoption of the Chinese taste.

Montagu pursued her decorative intentions in the creation of the Chinese Room at her house in Hill Street, which was lined with painted wallpaper from Peking and furnished with Chinese and other foreign accessories. At the Montagu residency at Hill Street, the expression of the Chinese taste was entirely the work of Elizabeth. In 1748, she wrote to her sister Sarah on their brothers Robert, captain of an East India vessel, and Charles Robinson's return from travelling to India and China: 'My house looks like an Indian warehouse: I have got so many figures, jars, etc, etc, you would laugh at the collection'.<sup>72</sup> Montagu has relocated the centre of the world in her own house. India is no longer the central point of exchange between China and the rest of the Far East and Europe: Montagu's London home has become the centre of society and global exchange, filled with tokens of distance represented in the domestic.

The domestic had undergone a transformation to an absurd extreme, yet this transformation of space allowed the arm-chair traveller to explore the novel and exotic and gave women an arena in which to display taste, assert choice and engage in workmanlike effort. However, this effort was contained within areas that were coded as appropriate to be subject to the female hand were the intimate spaces of the bedroom and dressing room. Women could seek to negotiate opposition between female constraint, limitation and vulnerability and the

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<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 17 December 1748, *Elizabeth Montagu, the Queen of the Bluestockings*, ed. by Emily Climenson, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1908), I, pp. 128, 262-63. Further references from this edition.



increasing possibility offered by the rest of the world through the adoption of a foreign aesthetic in the most intimate of domestic spaces.<sup>73</sup>

A further reason for remodelling her dressing room in the Chinese aesthetic may lie in Montagu's desire to recreate the concept of the French salon for Englishwomen. The leading lights of French salonnière culture, such as Madame du Deffand, Madame Geoffrin, Madame Condorcet and Madame de Boccage, had an interest in China, which was encouraged by their association with Voltaire, who was passionate about Chinese philosophy. The French fashion for the Chinese aesthetic was such that terms including *à la Chinois* and, later, the *rococo*, were used by English connoisseurs and interior decorators.<sup>74</sup> Boccage actually visited Montagu, commenting favourably on her chosen Chinese aesthetic at Hill Street in April 1750:

The morning breakfasts [...] pleasantly bring together English people and foreigners. We thus breakfasted to-day at My Lady Montagu's, in a closet lined with painted paper of Pekin, and adorned with the prettiest Chinese furniture; a long table, covered with pellucid linen, and a thousand glittering vases presented to the view coffee, chocolate, biscuits, cream, butter, bread toasted in many ways, and exquisite tea.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Halsband, *Life of Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 281. In 1742, Elizabeth Robinson married Edward Montagu, a cousin of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's son. Elizabeth, upon meeting Mary, commented upon the vivacity of the older woman and, although only related by marriage and infrequent companions, Elizabeth admired her greatly, if made slightly anxious by her conservative reaction to Mary's independent attitude, as, according to Elizabeth, she 'neither thinks, speaks, acts nor dresses like anybody else'. Quoted in Cynthia J. Lowenthal, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2010), p. 249, n.1.

<sup>74</sup> See Maxine Berg 'Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution', in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 231. Berg identifies that 'the gout modèrne was associated with the new bourgeoisie in France. It was an assault on the social and political prerogatives of the nobility'.

<sup>75</sup> Madame de Boccage, *Lettres sur L'Angleterre*, quoted in René Louis Huchon, *Mrs. Montagu, 1720-1800: an essay proposed as a thesis to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Paris* (London: Murray, 1907), p. 204. Boccage wrote the tragedy, *Les Amazones* (1749), epic poems, including *La Colombiade ou la Foi portée au Nouveau*

Boccage's salon in Paris rivalled that of Madame Geoffrin and Montagu based her own social circles on what she learned of the French equivalents.<sup>76</sup> The Frenchwoman's familiarity with and approval of the aesthetic choices by Montagu at Hill Street suggest that Montagu was recognisably fashionable. The foreign aesthetic hinted at an outward-looking and sophisticated person with a cosmopolitan rather than nationalist perspective. The space is not coded as stridently English but as one in which 'English people and foreigners' could socialise comfortably and equanimously.

Montagu had yet to visit Paris, as she did not leave for France until the year following her husband's death in 1775 and so, in her admiration of Frenchwomen's salons, it is convincing to suggest that she delighted in adopting the fashion à la Chinois in order to emulate the French salons, with a rather immature emphasis on popularity. Montagu and her husband only established their habit of wintering in London in 1750, and so it is arguable that Montagu's early delight with numbers reflected her desire to become embedded in London society, as she wrote delightedly that her Chinese room could hold 'rather more than a hundred visitants [...] but the apartment held them with ease, and the highest compliments were paid to the house.'<sup>77</sup> Once Montagu established her own bluestocking circle, with its own identity, she eschewed emulation and wanton popularity and instead possessed a greater desire to act as a leader of fashion and taste and to collect around her the brightest and best of society, although she never quite lost her desire to see her apartments filled with people.

In the two years that elapsed between Montagu's description of an 'Indian warehouse', she undertook a process of selection and arrangement to domesticate the warehouse. Fans and fan-shaped furniture, cushions and gauze suggest a lush

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*Monde* (1758), and her own translation and interpretation of Milton, *Le Paradis Terrestre* (1754). See also Madame de Boccage, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 3 vols (Lyon: Chez les Frères Perisse, 1762).

<sup>76</sup> For more details about Geoffrin's salon see Pierre de Segur, *Le Royaume de la Rue Saint-Honoré: Madame Geoffrin et sa fille* (Paris: Calmann Lèvy, 1897), p. 35, n. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Mr Montagu, 3 May 1753, Climenson, II, p. 30.

environment with delicate frames, exuding comfort, luxury and feminine lightness or softness. In January 1750, Montagu recounted to her sister Sarah:

The very curtains are Chinese pictures on gauze, and the chairs the Indian fan sticks with cushions of Japan satin painted: as to the beauty of the colouring, it is carried as high as possible, but the toilette you were so good as to paint is the only thing where nature triumphs.<sup>78</sup>

The reference to the toilette cover demarcates Montagu's Chinese room as a space which is public and private: the process of the toilette was an intimate one, requiring the covering of the instruments used in the process, yet also one of display and decoration. Whereas the decorative extras are depersonalised items from elsewhere, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, the toilette was painted with flowers by Montagu's sister Sarah; this proximity and intimacy of connection is what she holds above the generic others. Still, the inclusion of impersonal and intimate objects reflects the blurring of boundaries between the public and private represented by the Chinese room.<sup>79</sup>

Montagu considers the contrast between the Empire of China and English rural beauty in a letter to her cousin Gilbert West, who stayed at her Hill Street home whilst attending as clerk the Privy Council:

I imagine that by this time you are in the Empire of China. The leafless trees and barren soil of my landscape will very ill bear comparison with shady oaks and beautiful verdure of South Lodge

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<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 3 January 1750, Climensson, I, p. 170.

<sup>79</sup> For example, the presence of foreign figures such as the Asian and African servants in Hogarth's depiction of the toilette, and the Chinese lady shown at her toilette on the trade card of John Platt, an English cabinet maker in Covent Garden, indicates an intrusion, a clear presence, of foreignness into a private, domestic space. The Chinese lady at her toilette serves to collapse boundaries of difference by advertising an assumed universal womanhood; this exoticised version of the European toilette evokes an apparently authentic foreignness which the household furniture that Platt makes and sells does not actually possess. See appendix (p. 301-305).

and the grinning Mandarins still worse supply the place of a British Statesman: but as you can improve every society and place into which you enter, I expect such hints from you as will set off the figures, and enliven the landscape with rural beauty.<sup>80</sup>

Montagu's possessiveness in her self-deprecating letter conveys her sense of ownership of space, implying that the Empire of China, as well as a corner of India, are both within her domestic border. She is performing colonial acquisition, although she ranks those distant lands, and her efforts to replicate them, as beneath the beauties of England. It confirms her territory whilst also demonstrating the collapse between the distant and the domestic. The freedom of expression and the acquisition of the exotic merely serve to emphasise the physical limitations of geography for women. Montagu may imagine she is in possession of an Indian warehouse, but it is her brothers who were able to transport themselves beyond the boundary of the home, England and Europe. Although she presented the room as alien to the robust masculine Britishness evoked by oak trees and greenness, Montagu welcomes the male intrusion, regarding it to be an ameliorating circumstance, becoming a domestic parallel of colonisation.

The relationship between female aesthetical independence and a woman's ownership and control of space, as well as the blurring of the public and private that occurred in the dressing room, generated a social anxiety that is expressed in contemporary literature, even becoming 'a stock-in-trade for literary representations', particularly satire.<sup>81</sup> Chico notes:

Satires repeatedly imagine that women are 'fallen' and are consumed by a vanity that itself presupposes the *absence* of beauty and authenticity. But [...] satires about women also use the dressing room to foreground the theme of artifice, all the while

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<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Gilbert West, 26 May 1752, Climensson, II, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Chico, *Dressing Rooms*, p. 3.

expressing their own preoccupation with which kind of artifice [...] is ultimately more persuasive'.<sup>82</sup>

Chico calls this the 'satiric double take'. Montagu was also captivated by the satiric double-take, as she writes, 'I have a great mind to sit this Winter like a true Empress of China in retired state with nodding mandarins about me, I think I have a Chinese Palace & why may I not have the rest of her Chinese Majestys (sic) prerogatives'.<sup>83</sup> Montagu realises the gap between her perspective of Chineseness and authentic China, for she inserts a qualifying 'I think I have'. Although the adoption of an exotic mantle ensured that Montagu, as in her fond imagining of pretending to be the Empress of China, could become the centre of attention, a sun-like object around which others circled admiringly, nevertheless she was anxious about the nature of seeking public adoration and its tension with the domestic role of the woman. This is reflected in her assertion of the public sphere as immoral, for Montagu considers that 'actions of a public nature often are inspired by vanity, domestic behaviour has not popular applause for its object, tho' with sober judgement, as Mr Pope says of silence, 'its very want of voice makes it a kind of fame''.<sup>84</sup>

In jokingly adopting the mantle of a Chinese empress, Montagu actively engaged in her self-objectification, turning herself into a spectacle and surrounded by ambiguous mandarins: they could be porcelain objects on a mantelpiece or servile

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 8 September 1751. San Marino, Huntington Library (HL), MSS Elizabeth Montagu Letters, MO2241 B, 1-2. I am indebted to Elizabeth Eger for sharing her research, which Dr Eger completed at the Huntington Library and will form the basis of her upcoming, and much needed, biography of Elizabeth Montagu. Susan Mann's *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) gives a detailed account of the way in which the intellectual attainment of Chinese women in very small numbers within the High Qing elite helped these women develop new spheres of influence in upper echelons of Chinese society. Although not drawn out in her work, read in parallel with my own research, it points to a polygenetic or parallel development in eighteenth-century attitudes towards and status of women in Britain and China.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

but living bureaucrats, and embody both at the same time.

The satiric double-take lies in the presentation of Montagu: not a literal empress but still an empress of society. Her emphasis on thought also mocks her own imagination as powerful yet excessive. Montagu embraces the imaginative possibility of personal space in her use of alternative labels for her Chinese room; she uses a simile to refer to her own 'dressing room in London [...] [as] like the Temple of some Indian god', a reference that simultaneously elevates her by deifying (if in a heathen manner) her space and mocks her own excessiveness.<sup>85</sup>

Montagu's self-deprecating humour reveals an anxiety in her choices about dressing up. In June 1752, Captain Robert Robinson returned from China, bringing Elizabeth 'two beautiful gowns and a fine Chinese lanthorn (sic)', which allowed Montagu to attend a ball where she 'shone forth in full Chinese pomp [...] [Her] gown was much liked, the pattern of the embroidery admired extremely'.<sup>86</sup> The use of props and costume in the staging of the persona is something that preoccupies Montagu frequently.<sup>87</sup> Montagu determines that social life is a performance, as she complains that 'in the Public Rooms [at Tunbridge] [...] it is but the same scene on another stage', listing an all-female cast that includes 'the Country Lady [...] her Cherry cheek Daughter [...] the Mechanics wife [...] the Squires Lady [...] Miss from Ranelagh, & the Bonne Bourgeoise from Marybone Gardens'.<sup>88</sup> Although Montagu is irritated by the presence of the middling sort, the bourgeois, the description of a uniquely female stage conveys an occupation, even ownership, of the public space by women. The assertion of this femaleness is significant, as assembly rooms were a mixed-sex environment that, in addition to being a place of conversation, lectures, recitals, concerts, dancing, and playing cards, were a core place for engagement in the marriage market.

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<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, January 1750, Climensson, I, p. 170.

<sup>86</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, June 1752, Climensson, I, p. 10-11.

<sup>87</sup> Theatrical properties is a term that originates from the mid-fifteenth century; the abbreviation 'props' emerged in 1841 and the singular 'prop' in 1911. 'property, n.5' *OED*.

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 30 August 1751, HL MO2240 A, 1. E. Eger research.

The significance of these public rooms as a space of open community and commingling for women is summarised by Elizabeth when she writes to Edward Montagu in 1751 about her antipathy towards the ‘vanities and vexations’ derived from ‘the meeting of the busy & the gay World in London [that] calls you to the house of Commons & me to Assemblies’.<sup>89</sup> She conveys the parallel public worlds of men and women: one of political representative assembly, the other a place of representing the self in assembly; of course, men had the privilege of travelling freely between the two.<sup>90</sup>

Montagu is suspicious of the political process, but is also concerned by the inability of women to engage usefully in the political process, although this may

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<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth to Edward Montagu, 8 September 1751, HL MO2241 B, 1-2. E. Eger Research.

<sup>90</sup> Eleven years later, Elizabeth Montagu did attend the Speakers’ Gallery, writing to Mary Robinson in 1762 about her experiences. Montagu recounts:

I am so poor a politician, that... I should be able to give you but a lame account of the situation of affairs here. In the House of Commons every boy who can articulate is a speaker, to the great dispatch of business and solidity of councils... [E]very young gentleman who has a handsome person, a fine coat, a well-shaped leg, or a clear voice, is to exhibit these advantages. To this kind of beau-oratory and tea-table talk, the ladies, as is reasonable, resort very constantly. At first they attended in such numbers as to fill the body of the house on great political questions, but having all their lives been aiming at conquests, committing murders, and enslaving mankind, they were for most violent and bloody measures: desirous of a war with Spain and France, fond of battles on the Continent, and delighted with the prospect of victories in the East and West Indies [...] [B]ut [...] a ghost started up in a dirty obscure alley in the city, and diverted the attention of the female politicians, from the glory of their country, to an inquiry, why Miss Fanny, who died of the small pox two years ago, and suffered herself to be buried, does now appear in the shape of the sound of a hammer, and rap and scratch at the head of Miss Parsons’s bed, the daughter of a parish clerk? ... [Y]ou could never conceive that the most bungling performance of the silliest imposture could take up the attention, and conversation, of all the fine world.

Mrs Montagu to Mrs Robinson, 26 February 1762, quoted in Samuel Egerton Brydges, *Censura Literaria: Containing Titles, Abstracts and Opinions of Old English Books with Original Disquisitions, Articles of Biography, and Other Literary Antiquities* (London: Longman, 1807), III, p. 260. The ghost to which Montagu refers is the Cock Lane Ghost, which caused a sensation during 1762 as séances were performed to determine the guilt of a suspect, William Kent, in the death of Fanny Lynes. Paul Chambers, *The Cock Lane Ghost: Murder, Sex and Haunting in Dr Johnson’s London* (Stroud: Sutton, 2006).

be due to the fact that ‘the education of women is always too frivolous’.<sup>91</sup> In her opinion, though, there is a danger of pejorative spectacle and performance, reducing sociability to farce and beau-oratory. It also reveals Montagu’s uncomfortable view of the female role in society, and how her ideas have matured in the eleven years since she described the assembly rooms. Although wary, and weary, of the ‘vanities and vexations’ of public life, in the same letter of 1751, Montagu shows great willingness to consider frivolity for herself.

Montagu possessed a strong sense of the construction and nature of space impacting upon the character of the person performing within it. She acknowledges the possibility that a space can become synonymous with the person in it, although she highlights her own physical difference as a protection against the foreign aesthetic exoticising her body too greatly:

If I was remarkably short and had a great head, I should be afraid people would think I meant myself Divine Honours, but I can so little pretend to the embonpoint of a Josse, it is impossible to suspect me of such presumption.<sup>92</sup>

Her words bear a mantle of lightness of tone that dresses the more serious consideration of space as transformative, as well as location, which has bearing on her recreation of China in her Chinese room. Eleven years later, Montagu clarified her understanding of the relationship between place, identity and sensation. When writing to Mrs Carter on 7 June 1761, Montagu declared:

[Upon taking] flight to Berkshire [...] I have been ever since Friday evening leading a Pastoral life in the finest weather [...] Tho’ the most sage Horace says we change our climate without changing our disposition, I must be of the other opinion by only the difference of latitude and longitude between London and

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<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 30 August 1751, HL MO2240 B, 3-4. E Eger Research.

<sup>92</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to her sister Sarah Scott, January 1750, Climenson, I, p.170.



Sandleford I am become one of the most reasonable, quiet, good,  
kind of country gentlewoman.<sup>93</sup>

In the same way she cannot truly be mistaken for a Josse, neither can Montagu be intrinsically a quiet and isolated gentlewoman: she merely plays the part of it when in appropriate setting. She challenges Horace in asserting that the authentic experience of travel can result in some alteration of disposition, marked by her use of cartographic lexis in describing her journey; by contrast, dressing up a room and self to recreate elsewhere is an inauthentic travel experience and so any transformation is superficial.

With a developing sense of relationship between the body, interiority and domestic interiors that supplemented her playful interpretation of the relationship between dress and body, during the 1760s, Montagu edited and refined the Chinese taste to become a new version that no longer created another world within the domestic space, a global melting plot warehoused in a room. The softening of Chinese accents in her space gave it a femininity and an assertion of womanhood that she, and others, recognised and in which she took pleasure. Likewise, it gave workmanlike purpose into which Montagu's energy could be channelled.

Although she engaged the assistance of a fashionable designer, the organisation and choices made were undertaken by Montagu or, when she was unavailable, by her sister. Robert Adam was associated strongly with the neo-classical and Palladian styles and typically resisted the Chinese taste. It is arguable that the Oriental aspects retained in the scheme on the decision of Montagu was done to demonstrate her power and authority over the architect Robert Adam in her demand for his compliance to an aesthetic that he did not like or pursue in his other work.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, 7 June 1761, Climensson, II, p. 244.

<sup>94</sup> The level of control exercised by Sarah on behalf of her sister is expressed in her letter to the absent Elizabeth: 'Mr. Adams called on me two days ago with the pattern for your chairs. I got the silk that afternoon & sent it to him to be drawn [...] They will be very pretty & match the carpet greatly; but will make a great deal of work.' Letter from Sarah

Despite distinguishing between the beauty of object and feeling, and valorising the latter above the former, Montagu does read an assertion of gender identity in her choice of redecoration during the 1760s, during which she engaged Robert Adam. Montagu wrote to her sister, ‘I assure you the dressing room is now just the female of the great room, for sweet attractive grace, for winning softness, for *le je ne sais quoi* it is incomparable.’<sup>95</sup> The room does not inscribe upon its inhabitants, but instead reflects an idealised version of femininity, with its concomitant mysteriousness, which was borne from ‘the Chinese room [...] [having its] elements [...] much mitigated, as befits the winter season.’<sup>96</sup>

Once moderated, the Chinese taste becomes a female taste: the process of moderation allows a woman to exert choice and taste; the room reflects the woman. Montagu associates the unmediated, excessive use of the Chinese aesthetic with being out of control: a lavishly exotic interior can transport the viewer and present a challenge of synthesis and organisation which left Montagu feeling initially that she was in a chaotic warehouse. By comparison, a mediated version brings the Chinese taste under the authority of the female arbiter of taste; rather than swamping a space or a person with a profusion of signs, the taste becomes a readily controlled tool of communicating the good taste and ideas as well as the civility and refinement of the decorator. This flexibility helps define the female response to China: the aesthetic can be shaped to the personal taste of the woman and judgement could be displayed in the arrangement of a room. Eclecticism, borrowing from diverse sources, shares its Greek root, *eklektikos*, with selection. This synthesis of diversity and selection in the most refined and

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Scott to Mrs Montagu, June 1766, HL MO 5331, quoted in Rosemary Baird, “‘The Queen of the Bluestockings’: Mrs Montagu’s house at 23 Hill Street rediscovered” *Apollo: The International Magazine of Arts*, 198 (August, 2003): 43-49 (p.45).

<sup>95</sup> HL MO 5846, letter from Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 8 January 1767, quoted in *Mrs Montagu, ‘Queen of the Blues’: her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, ed. by Reginald Blunt, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1923), I, p. 153.

<sup>96</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter in December 1765, quoted in Rosemary Baird, “‘The Queen of the Bluestockings’: Mrs Montagu’s house at 23 Hill Street rediscovered”, p. 45. The ‘mitigation’ included an introduction by Adam of a classical ceiling, with eight roundels depicting Chinoiserie scenes, the drawing of which, according to Baird, is held in Sir John Soane’s Museum.

judicious arrangement defined eighteenth-century decorative choice.

Decision making was essential and was assisted further by manuals which were published with the intent of assisting selection, reducing the plethora to key designs that complied with the height of good taste and fashion.<sup>97</sup>

### Montagu and the Doctrine of Ornamentation

Montagu frequently frames her discourse of ornamentation around three themes: vanity, frivolity and utility.<sup>98</sup> Montagu presents many different versions of herself, which she adapts according to her audience and so makes it hard to identify a concrete set of beliefs on a subject. Montagu's epistle on her 'doctrine of Ornaments' to Lord Kames, on 13 April 1767, was then published unaccredited in a collection by Kames on beauty, presents some contradictory ideas.<sup>99</sup> For Montagu, her earliest forays into adopting a Chinese mantle were defined by excess and intensity; her continuing relationship with the Chinese aesthetic was uncomfortable and changing. In some ways, the style's playfulness appealed to her, influenced perhaps by her brothers, who were bringing back new, exciting and exotic products. However, Montagu struggled to reconcile the appeal of Oriental playfulness with the serious intellectualism represented by the neo-classical.

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<sup>97</sup> Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman & Cabinet-Maker's Director* (London: Printed for the Author, and sold at his House in St. Martin's-Lane, 1754) promises on its title page 'the most elegant and useful designs of household furniture in the Gothic, Chinese and modern taste' and John Crunden's *The Joyner and Cabinet-maker's Darling* (London: A. Webley, 1770) contains engravings of 'Gothic, Chinese, Mosaic, and Ornamental Frets [...] and Twenty new and beautiful Designs for Gothic, Modern, and Ornamental'.

<sup>98</sup> 'vanity, n.' *OED*. Derived from the Latin *vanus*, empty, vanity can refer to both the quality of being vain as well as a fashionable trifle or knick-knack; vanities are thus both immaterial and material.

<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, on 13 April 1767, in *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*, ed. by Gary Kelly, 6 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), I, pp.174-179; 178. Further references from this edition.

Her formal letter to Kames, written in 1767 and printed in his *Essays on Criticism*, two years after the Chineseness of the Hill Street Chinese room had been ‘mediated’, asserts in the strongest terms Montagu’s determination that the Chinese aesthetic lacks meaning, precisely because it was disconnected from a literature and history that could imbue the objects with significance and reverence. In the same letter, Montagu describes the way in which she ‘look[s] with pleasure on some instruments of sacrifice on my white marble chimney piece but if Mr Adams had put me such a group of modern cutlery ware I should have been offended’; a sense of history and alienation are important part of the appeal of an object for display.<sup>100</sup>

The alienation is tinged, oxymoronic, with familiarity, for the veneration of Greco-Roman antiquity is partly due to the fact that it has been ‘ennobled by the Majesty of the Commonwealth’; in other words, through the ties with European history and culture.<sup>101</sup> By comparison, ‘Old [porcelain] China, the delight of fine Ladies, is never an object of veneration, it gives no pleasure to the imagination. Pekin rivals not in our opinion Rome & Athens, & the object does not suggest any pleasing ideas’.<sup>102</sup> Either Montagu had moved on from her earlier imaginative excitement, or she felt that, in writing in an intellectual manner to a man who is planning to print the work, she must conform to the general preference amongst scholars and intellectuals for the classics, which were the predominant subjects in male education at school and university and so helped foster a veneration for associated forms.

In Kames’s initial invitation to Elizabeth Montagu to write on the subject, he was not condemnatory of the Chinese aesthetic, nor does he identify what Porter identifies as the illegitimacy of the Chinese aesthetic, but instead is merely explicit about its limitations. Kames conceives of a limited arena of Chinese excellence, of silk and paper, and of subject, nature, implying that British tastes and skills may conquer the rest: ‘In things merely ornamental, nothing can do

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<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, *Bluestocking Feminism*, I, p. 176.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

better than to copy the works of nature. Hence the beauty of Chinese paper, imitating plants and flowers, flowered silks, &c.’<sup>103</sup>

Nonetheless, Montagu is confronted with the difficulty of negotiating the valorisation of male-dominated classical learning, as she rejects that great metonym for China, ‘Old China’, as a female preoccupation with pleasure-giving rather than inspiring ideas and creative thought. In fact, Montagu referred obliquely to this very mine-field in response to Kames, who first wrote to Montagu saying, ‘My purpose in these questions is to draw you by degrees into a critical correspondence. Would it be too much for me to hope for your assistance in the intended new edition of the *Elements*? I should be proud to have your name conjoined with mine in that work’.<sup>104</sup> To this, Montagu replied, ‘Your Lordship does me very unmerited honour, in wishing my name joined to yours in that work; it would be like setting the impression of my silver *thimble* beside the *broad seal* of England’ (Montagu’s italics).<sup>105</sup> Montagu identifies objects as metonyms for gender, contrasting the privacy and smallness of the act of sewing with the public seal of a nation, the British Great Seal of the Realm.

Montagu’s choice of metonym reinforces the image of femininity even when she is asserting her female intellectual authority, although significantly she presents it as placing her thoughts alongside rather than upon or beneath Kames’s work. In the letter, Montagu adopts self-derisively a symbol of frivolity by describing herself as ‘a butterfly, not a bee [...] unqualified to collect the sweets I feast on’.<sup>106</sup>

The image moderates her female engagement and intellectual activity by casting herself as a thing of aesthetic uselessness, an isolate creature typically collected and pinned into a cabinet, in comparison to the hard-working and useful member

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<sup>103</sup> Lord Kames to Elizabeth Montagu, 29 October 1766, ‘Correspondence’, *Boston Anthology*, V, p.151.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p.152.

<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, *Bluestocking Feminism*, p. 174.

of society represented by the bee. The letter is preoccupied with the relationship between ornament and utility, making a case for the importance of veneration and ‘a desire to represent the object of devotion’ and that although ‘the sober eye of reason beholds some approbation, every thing of known utility [...] the eye of imagination, in its fine phrenzy rolling catches with rapture a glance of an intellectual world’.<sup>107</sup> Ornamentation connects the interior decoration with interiority, as Montagu links material objects with systems of ideas: ‘Objects are often recommended more by introducing a certain set of ideas than from their form’.<sup>108</sup> She regards ornaments as stimuli, which supersedes consideration of their appearance.

Lord Kames presents a theory that envisages an ornament’s purpose and aesthetic as symbiotic or parallel and complimentary rather than bound together in a single form:

In things made for use, the parts ought to be so constructed as to answer precisely their purpose. Such things, it is true, may admit of ornament; but the constituent parts and the ornaments ought not to be jumbled together. I admit, for example, carved work on a chair, representing leaves or flowers; but what is the meaning of giving feet to a chair representing those of a lion, or of an eagle? What do you think of teaspoons made to imitate the leaf of a tree? A leaf is of all things the least proper for a spoon. And does not there lie the same objection against a fabrick for holding candles, composed of artificial

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 175-176.

<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, *Bluestocking Feminism*, p. 176. Elizabeth Eger suggests that Montagu lifted the phrase ‘fine phrenzy’ from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*, V.i.12 (*Bluestocking Feminism*, I, p. 227, n.93). In *The Artist as Original Genius: Shakespeare’s ‘Fine Frenzy’ in Late Eighteenth-century British Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), William L. Pressly discusses the emergence in the eighteenth century of the perception of the artist as an original genius, which he argues was the product of their own anxiety. Shakespeare offered the first model to artists in the pursuit of original genius; at the core of the artistic philosophy was Shakespeare’s maxim from *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*.

branches and leaves, with artificial birds sitting upon them ? <sup>109</sup>

To this, Elizabeth Montagu replied:

In things of use, the ornamental part should be subordinate, and the propriety and fitness to its purpose should be apparent. The feet of a chair should express steadiness and firmness. A claw, whether of lion or eagle, is absurd; as the business of it is not to snatch or tear, but to support. Foliages round the frame of a chair or table, are not improper, they adorn the form, without perverting it; and Such ornaments are so natural, we may suppose, that in the ages of simplicity, in honour of extraordinary guests, or to add a gaiety to feasts, flowers and branches were put on them. <sup>110</sup>

Montagu articulates the power of signification of objects and that the message of the image should avoid incongruity. She continues:

We have fine Gothick buildings in this country, and we have imported Grecian and Roman architecture; but in regard to *les meubles*, we are still in a very barbarous state. I think I could explain why we are so, if my letter was not already too long, to admit of tracing these things to their sources: so I shall only observe, that the old Goths loved punning, and their most polite descendants are addicted to *concetti*. The tealeaf imitated in a teaspoon, is most absurd; but in the infancy and decline of taste, the imagination sports with resemblances, relations and analogies; too weak to form a complete design, it pursues some hint given by the nature of the

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<sup>109</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, 13 April 1767, Letter 1, 'Correspondence Between Lord Kames and Mrs Montagu', *The Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review* (Munroe and Francis, 1808), V, p. 151. Mrs. Montagu in a tour she made to the Highlands in the autumn of 1766, spent some days at Blair-Drummond -with Lord Kames, after her return to her country seat in Northumberland, the noble Lord thus addresses her in a letter dated 29 October 1766.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

thing to be adorned'.<sup>111</sup>

*Concetti* is Italian for idea or conceit but, in choosing the Italian word, Montagu evokes the term for the stock punch line in a *Commedia dell'Arte*, thus conveying her condemnation of the aesthetic practice as derivative to the point of comic. Montagu also reveals the playfulness of imagination, even though she argues that the British have yet to evolve this form of inspiration. In this, she notes the limitations of all forms of external inspiration, including Montagu's opinion which valorised the Greco-Roman aesthetic, as it reduces the British to imitators rather than creators. A limited interpretative ability with regards to object signification results in facsimiles and connections such as the 'tealeaf imitated in a teaspoon'. In its way, it is an oblique defence of the Chinese aesthetic, despite desecrating the 'lazy Asiatick', for Montagu argues that external inspiration shapes the British understanding of taste in its infancy. Ultimately, though, it is a nationalist call for the advancement of British ingenuity independently of these other influences and thus improve beyond furniture-barbarism.

Perhaps explaining Montagu's fascination with costume, dress and architectural design, she suggests that 'in ornament of dress we should apply to opinion; in those of edifices to imagination'.<sup>112</sup> Her engagement with clothes, interiors and architecture is founded upon how they facilitate her interaction with the rest of the world and the way in which others respond to her, as well as their impact upon her creative thought. Dress could be as complex for men as it is for women, as Montagu explores further in the idea of excessive ornamentation of dress in the description of her friendly acquaintance, Dr. Courayer, who has so heavily disguised himself as an Oriental figure that he has become 'the finest bit of Chinese furniture', ready to be placed on Montagu's mantelpiece.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.153.

<sup>112</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, *Bluestocking Feminism*, p.176.



As Batchelor observes, the language of clothes is often arbitrary and unstable, ‘its meanings vulnerable to manipulation and misinterpretation’ and, for men as much as women, dressing was thus a ‘tricky balancing act’, at which Dr Courayer has failed spectacularly.<sup>113</sup> Montagu’s description of the decorative emblems of the French academic Dr Courayer, on 31 October 1750, reveals her reaction against such outré signification, in which the sign has become so exaggerated that the meaning is devalued to absurdity:

I was obliged to pass through all the gay vanities of Mrs Chevenix, and then ascend a most steep and difficult staircase to get at the little Philosopher: this way to wisdom through the vanities and splendid toys of the world [...] [Courayer] himself to an emblemizing genius would have afforded an ample subject; his head was enfoncé in a cap of the warmest beaver, made still more respectable by a gold orracle, a wondrous hieroglyphick robe he wore, in which was portrayed all the attributes of the god Fo, with the arms and delineaments of the Cham of Tartary [...] I began to consider him the best piece of Chinese furniture I had ever seen, and could hardly forbear offering him a place on my chimney-piece.<sup>114</sup>

Montagu parodies journeys of exploration, presenting a microcosmic adventure through metonymies of foreignness, reflecting the lack of opportunity of women to enjoy authentic travel. Courayer is objectified: his exotic exterior has become a collection of signs that give way to emblematisation, allegorisation or portrayal that are as incomprehensible to read as hieroglyphs. Montagu differentiates between the dressing of the room and the dressing of the person: one permitted imaginative travel and facilitated the temporary pretence of being an Empress of China by creating a setting for the performance, the other was a masquerade in which the adoption of an exotic mantle altered the perception of others of the

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<sup>113</sup> Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire*, p. 9.

<sup>114</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Mr. Gilbert West, 31 October 1751, Climensson, I, pp.294-295.

individual that was more threatening, as it could alter the individual to an absurd degree.

In her letter to Lord Kames, Montagu wrote that ‘too curious adorning of the Person makes a Man appear effeminate, a Woman Coquettish’, whilst in her description of Courayer, the transformative power of dress has reduced an intellectual to an image of confusion and ridiculousness.<sup>115</sup>

A particular irony exists in the reduction of Courayer to a silent ornament on display, for he was a celebrated religious controversialist who wrote widely and corresponded with high Anglicans such as Francis Atterbury. However, after the death of Richard Challoner in 1781, with whom Courayer engaged in an inter-faith dialogue, John Milner commented caustically that Le Courayer ‘was protected and almost idolized by the [Anglican] clergy, who placed his picture in the Bodleian Library, and by some of the nobility who supported him in the most affluent and honorable manner’.<sup>116</sup> The suggestion that such a celebrated person could become detached from his actual person and come to signify and be signified by his works and image alone is evident not only in Milner’s words, but also in Montagu’s description of an absurd-looking Courayer, dressed in empty foreign signs, far removed from the seriousness and respectability of his works, bearing such titles as *A Dissertation on the Validity of the Ordinations of the English, and of the Succession of the Bishops of the Anglican Church; with the Proofs Establishing the Facts Advanced in this Work* (1728). In appearing dressed as ‘all Chinese’, sign and meaning are confused: instead of being able to identify a Christian intellectual, the clothing symbols recall the Chinese god Fo; rather than reveal the man and his history, the clothes begin to signify a thing that is far

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<sup>115</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, *Bluestocking Feminism*, p.176.

<sup>116</sup> J. Milner, ‘A brief account of the life of the late R. Rev. Richard Challoner’, in R. Challoner, *The Grounds of the Old Religion*, 5th edn. (London: J. P. Coghlan, 1798), p. 28. It is worth noting that Voltaire acknowledges both Courayer’s fame and his link to the Montagu family through Mary Wortley Montagu, ‘who encourages the celebrated father Courayer’. ‘Inoculation’ in *The Works of Voltaire: A Contemporary Version. A Critique and Biography by John Morley, notes by Tobias Smollett*, trans. by William F. Fleming (New York: E.R. Du Mont, 1901), XIX, p. 21 <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/666>> [Accessed 10 May 2011].

removed from the original identity of the individual.

Montagu makes clear early on in her adoption of the Chinese taste her own detachment from her Chinese room in her communication with her cousin Gilbert West, as she seeks to reassure him that ‘I hope you do not attribute my pleasure in receiving your letters, or readiness to answer them, merely to a Chinese taste.’<sup>117</sup> She differentiates between the beauty of objects and that of feelings, recognising the pleasure of one to be less than that of the other:

I think it may be owing to a better cause, an admiration of what is beautiful in sentiment and morals, rather than for the fantastic and grotesque in forms and figure: so though I am pleased with the perfection my room will receive from your assistance, and much obliged to you for the trouble you take on that account, accept my first thanks for the more rational and elegant part of my pleasure, the letters it occasions you to write.<sup>118</sup>

Montagu derives pleasure from her process of decoration and that this process assists in generating discourse and connecting her to the republic of letters. Nevertheless, anxiety is evident in her reassurance to her cousin that he must not equate her Chinese taste with any deeper or predominant feeling on her behalf.

Elizabeth’s letter from 3 January 1750, addressed to her sister Sarah, conveys the idea that one can and should mediate the Chinese taste. Writing after the death of Mrs Cotes’s husband Dr Cotes, she remarked:

I saw our friend Cotes [...] she is very well and in good spirits, and seems determined to keep her freedom and enter no more into wedlock’s bonds. She has only a small lodging, and I think with her economy she might afford herself a house of her own, and she might

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<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Gilbert West, 26 May 1751, *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, ed. by Matthew Montagu, 3 vols (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1825), II, p. 220.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

furnish it in the present fashion of some cheap paper and ornaments of Chelsea China or the manufacture of Bow, which makes a room look neat and finished. They are not so sumptuous as mighty Pagodas of China or nodding Mandarins.<sup>119</sup>

The repetition of the female pronoun and female possessive pronoun littered through the text highlights Cotes's independent state, and Montagu regards marriage in terms of binding women in their confinement within marriage; there is also the threat that the widowed woman can be ejected from her home by her son. The potential for decoration in Montagu's letter offers an assertion of Cotes's personal taste rather than an exhibition of wealth; it is also her defence against charges of profligacy of purse and thus of person.

By being restrained in the geographical reach and the price of her decoration, Cotes could prove her independence and autonomy whilst reflecting and promoting her character and reputation. Montagu advocates that Cotes performs her independence with rationality and judicious and prudent selection. The pagodas and nodding mandarins function as metonyms for excess which can be resisted with sensible, restrained British equivalents, fostering a discourse of British goods as signifiers of modesty rather than dismissing the goods as straightforwardly inferior, which they were until Wedgwood unlocked the secrets of porcelain manufacture. A mediated version of the Chinese taste, this time altered through localism and modesty, gives the taste an alternative inflection to that of Montagu's initial forays into the Chinese taste, which had offered a veritable warehouse, capable of transporting the person within its midst into the 'Empire of China'.<sup>120</sup>

Montagu repeatedly reads domestic space as reflections of her acquaintances, and assesses their character based upon their relationship with their home; she

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<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 3 January 1750, Climensson, I, p. 95. Mrs Cotes, wife of Dr. Cotes, of Wimbledon, sister of Henry, Viscount Irvine, born 1691, died 1761. Dr Cotes attended Montagu at various points during her life.

<sup>120</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Gilbert West, 26 May 1752, *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu*, II, p. 8.

assumes that others will do the same to her. Indeed, Mr Montagu sent her the following description of Governor Hart's house at Rose Hill:

You might blame me if I omitted giving you some account of one of a kind very uncommon [...] Mr Hart's Chinese house [...] consists of a suite of rooms pav'd with pantyles and hung with paper, and on the outside is embellish'd with very costly decoration in the Chinese manner. Mr Stevens says the cost has been about two thousand pounds, but I don't believe three would pay for it. It seems to me no more than a whim, and so much money flung away [...] It might be agreeable to entertain company there in the finest and warmest weather, but one cannot think of it as an habitation without shuddering [...] [N]o use is made of it; three servants are kept there who have no other business than to look after the house.<sup>121</sup>

Mr Montagu conveyed his caveat towards his wife's taste somewhat circumspectly as, although he does not directly reprehend his wife, Mr Montagu conveys typical anxieties about the Chinese taste, governed by a fear of cost, lack of its utility and exoticness being unsuitable and even alien to British climes. The fleeting nature of the fashion concerns Mr Montagu, adding to the sense of threat to economy. His words add weight to Montagu's assertion that Cotes had to balance carefully between expression and economy in order to avoid censure.

Equally, in a letter to her husband about their friend Dr Young, Montagu expresses in her humorous comment a belief that a person's environment is a source of inspiration and creative thought. Dr Young's domestic proximity to the supernatural or unnatural echoes his own metaphysical nature:

His house is [...] opposite a church yard, which is to him a fine prospect; he has taught his imagination to sport with skulls like the

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<sup>121</sup> Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, 28 July 1757, Climensson, II, pp. 106-7.

gravedigger in Hamlet [...] His imagination soars above the material world, some would say his conversation is not natural. I say it is natural of him to be unnatural, that is out of the ordinary course of things.<sup>122</sup>

Montagu also draws a parallel between intellectual prowess and decorative objects, defending useful, productive domestic activity and offering an oblique criticism of male intellectualism versus female productivity:

It would be easier for him to give you a catalogue of the Stars than an inventory of the Household furniture he uses everyday. The busy world may say what it pleases, but some men were made for speculation, metaphysical men, like jars and flower pots, make good furniture for a cabinet, tho' useless in the kitchen, the pantry and the Dairy.<sup>123</sup>

Her developing sense of the interrelationship between space, body and interiority may have influenced Montagu's shift in aesthetic preference in her essay on ornament. As she tired of the derivative copies of Chinese objects, the objects became less able to communicate the particularities of taste and identity and merely pointed to, at best, a sense of economy and, at worst, fashionability diluted by the middling sort adopting the taste. The practice of mass-production originated in the sixteenth century Jingdezhen porcelain manufactories; the English manufacturers such as Wedgwood adopted similar methods, with Wedgwood escalating his pottery production during the 1760s. As Jessica Rawson notes:

China's most remarkable contribution was the creation of the first large-scale factories in which bronzes, lacquers, textiles, and ceramics were mass-produced, not using machines as in modern

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<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 19 September 1760, *Climenson*, II, pp. 199-200.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

factories, but using workers among whom the required processes were subdivided.<sup>124</sup>

Mass-production contravenes Montagu's belief that 'nor can imagination collect from any common Store House or Treasury subjects of universal celebrity', hence her rather snobbish dismissal of the Chinese aesthetic as trifling.<sup>125</sup> Once Chinese objects have lost their uniqueness and the same objects could be supplied in their hundreds or thousands, they can inspire only playful fancy, the mental faculty through which whims, visions, and fantasies are produced, rather than profound imagination, the faculty through which new ideas, images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses are formed. According to Montagu, although 'poverty will work wherever wealth will purchase its labours [...] where ornaments are not appertaining or derived from the sacred source of religious ceremonies or Civil institution, there may be fancy displayed & pains employ'd Art will not be establish'd on any principles'.<sup>126</sup> In particular, she critiques the way in which:

The lazy Asiatick [...] will have [his] decorations but as the value & reward of the manufacturer, who makes those decoration, depends on the fancy & caprice of a private Patron or customer, he dares not to lay out too much time & pains in his performance, he depends much on the fineness & richness of the materials... but he does not know at what [price] his invention will be estimated, for there is no common subject of veneration or liking between him or his Customer; the subject the artificier has chose may displease.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> J. Rawson, *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), pp. 30-31.

<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Lord Kames, quoted in *Bluestocking Feminism*, p. 178.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

It is unclear whether Montagu is aware of the irony of her criticism, for bending an artisan or designer to the will of a patron had been a long-standing practice in European culture; as a patroness of considerable cultural and economic value to those in receipt of her favour, Montagu herself made Robert Adam bend to her will and taste.

Another factor that may have stimulated Montagu's declining passion for the Chinese taste could have been the publication of Goldsmith's satire *A Citizen of the World* (1760), in which a 'lady of distinction' is mocked for her taste for the Chinese. This lady is 'a woman equally distinguished for rank, politeness, taste, and understanding' and so a cipher for any or all of the eldest in the bluestocking circle: Mary Delany, Elizabeth Carter, the Duchess of Portland, or Elizabeth Montagu herself.<sup>128</sup> The latter two are the most likely candidates due to their reputations as a collector of porcelain (the Duchess of Portland) and decorators of rooms in the Chinese aesthetic. Goldsmith's lady demands stimulation but whose suspect intellect and questionable education is revealed as she demands, 'Pray speak a little Chinese: I have learned some of the language myself', then declares, 'Have you nothing pretty from China about you; something that one does not know what to do with?'<sup>129</sup>

Goldsmith trivialises the Chinese taste as dominated by a desire for excessive foreignness, foreign to the point of obscurity and coupled with the antithesis of art and beauty, 'pretty'. The word itself is loaded with meaning, as not only is associated with delicate, diminutive feminine attractiveness, it also connotes cunning and craftiness.<sup>130</sup> This satirical attack on the Chinese taste denigrates both the aesthetic and the women who adopt it.

In a discussion of ornamentation, the lady of distinction continues with a defence of inutility as she tells Altangi: 'I have got twenty things from China that are of no use in the world. Look at those jars, they are of the right pea-green: these are the

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<sup>128</sup> Goldsmith, *A Citizen of the World* (London: J. and R. Childs, 1820), p. 68.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>130</sup> 'pretty, adj., n., and int.' *OED*.



furniture' (68). Considering the description of the lady's 'indolence', and the syntactical association of women as the proverbial 'best furniture of the house', the furniture reflects back upon the owner, in this case pejoratively. Altangi reveals an aesthetic relativism as he responds, 'Though they may appear fine in your eyes, are but paltry to a Chinese; but, as they are useful utensils, it is proper they should have a place in every apartment'. Altangi believes 'nothing is truly elegant but what unites use with beauty', and if something is 'empty and useless' then 'they are the most cumbrous and clumsy furniture in the world' (69).

Goldsmith presents the imaginative possibility inspired by foreign beauty as a distortion of truth: what the lady believes are her 'beautiful pagods' are lambasted by Altangi as the 'spread' of Fohi's 'gross superstitions [to] here'; it contradicts Montagu's argument that a 'certain set of ideas' may be inspired, as, in this instance, the appropriately Chinese set of ideas have not been projected by the object, in part because 'Mr Frieze designed it' for the lady of distinction (70).

According to Altangi, the pagoda may as well be 'called an Egyptian pyramid as a Chinese temple; for that little building in view is as like the one as t'other' (68). According to Goldsmith, the translation of a foreign aesthetic by a British interpreter of aesthetics has divorced the item from its cultural context and the meaning that it signifies; it becomes an empty costume that decorates without signification. True ornamentation, however, emphasises utility.

Ornaments possess a liminality that places them between art and decoration, which Montagu tries to separate out by categorising the classical ornament as art, in which 'the Grecians [...] remain our Superiors as well as our Masters in Ornament' and everything else is decoration, as 'in every country where there is any degree of civilization, the favourite objects of luxury & pride will be adorn'd with some cost & pains' (68). This, then points to the crux of Montagu's issue with ornaments: veneration creates a respectful distance; by comparison, adopting a mantle, adorning oneself or one's room is a ludic response that is more about indulgence and luxury than real thought, and attracts the gaze of onlookers to amaze and delight them. Similarly, with regards to the ornamentation of dress, the

bluestocking circle's habit of dressing up in classical costume is distinct from Elizabeth Montagu's dressing up in 'full Chinese pomp', as the latter was a ludic effort also designed to amaze and delight onlookers.

When Elizabeth Carter dressed as Minerva in a portrait by John Fayram (circa 1735-1741), or the key members of the bluestocking circle, including Elizabeth Montagu, were depicted in *Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo* by Richard Samuel (1779), it was to convey learning through concrete, familiar symbolism: Minerva was goddess of wisdom and patron of the arts; the women in the portrait by Samuel are holding musical instruments, or are painting, reading, writing or thinking about or discussing serious subjects.<sup>131</sup> There is an absence of playfulness: the muted colours and detailed scene invite the portraits' observers to study and contemplate rather than be dazzled by Chinese pomp, which is premised upon the idea of magnificence, splendour and ostentatious display.

The final death-knell for Montagu's association with a Chinese aesthetic was occasioned by the English salon culture evolving as distinct from rather than emulating the Frenchwomen's salons. This cooling between France and England is evident in Mrs Chapone's warning to a friend:

Don't let [Lady Hervey, who had just returned from attending salons held by Madame Geoffrin] make an infidel or a French woman of you, for she is as terrible and dangerous as the monsters that stand on the French shore.<sup>132</sup>

In 1777, in response to Montagu's effusive letters from France, Elizabeth Carter even warned her directly 'never listen to the half learning, the perverted

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<sup>131</sup> 'Elizabeth Carter' ('Elizabeth Carter as Minerva') by John Fayram (c.1735-1741), National Portrait Gallery, NPG L242; 'Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo' by Richard Samuel (1779), National Portrait Gallery, NPG 4905.

<sup>132</sup> *The Life and Correspondence of Mrs Chapone*, in *Works of Mrs. Chapone, with Her Life drawn up by her own Family*, 5 vols (London: J. Murray, 1807), II, p. 166.

understanding, and pert ridicule of French philosophers and beaux esprits'.<sup>133</sup>

In the same year, Montagu's study of Shakespeare had been printed in London and was known in Paris. Her reputation was established in comparison to her early efforts to fashion a space for intellectual socialisation; Montagu's initial emphasis on and delight in popularity and numbers of people received contrasts strongly with her later, more confident assertion of quality of person.

Likewise, as she gained in confidence as well as social and academic stature, Montagu increasingly edited the morass of Oriental influence into a refined and more muted Chinese style.

Finally, Voltaire, the great Sinophile and proponent of China and Chinese philosophy, made an adversary of Montagu. Whilst in France, Montagu attended an assembly in which Voltaire denounced Shakespeare in a Letter to the Academy read, by d'Alembert in the public sitting, which happened to be attended by Montagu on Sunday, 25 August, 1776. It prompted Montagu to translate fully into French a version of her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* (1764) with a reply to Voltaire.<sup>134</sup> It was entitled 'Apologie de Shakespear, en reponse a la critique de M. de Voltaire, traduite de l'anglois de Madame de Montagu'. The account of its publication is somewhat convoluted. In July 1776, when the letter from Voltaire to the academy was presented to the Paris salons, Montagu wrote to her sister of the difficulties of publishing her own text and of her contempt for Voltaire:

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<sup>133</sup> *A Series of Letters between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the year 1741 to 1770: To which are added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, between the years 1763 and 1787*, ed. by Catherine Talbot, 4 vols (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1809), IV, p. 174. Indeed, Montagu wrote to her sister on 2nd July of her delight over 'the hurlyburly of French suppers' as she did her best 'to lead the life of a Parisian lady'. René Louis Huchon, *Mrs. Montagu, 1720-1800: an essay proposed as a thesis to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Paris* (London: Murray, 1907), p. 170. Montagu's attempts at easy integration and conversing met with limited success, as Mme du Deffand wrote to Walpole: 'Sometimes I see Mrs. Montagu, I do not mean to be too pedantic, but she tries so hard to speak our language well, her conversation is painful' [my translation]; *Lettres à Horace Walpole* (Paris: Ponthieu, 1824), III, p. 321.

<sup>134</sup> See René Louis Huchon, *Mrs. Montagu, 1720-1800: an essay proposed as a thesis to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Paris* (London: Murray, 1907), pp.183-196.

A young man here made a very middling translation of my Essay; happily it was not gone to the press, so I bought it of him for twenty-five louis d'or rather than let him print it. While Voltaire lives, the writers of reputation dare not translate it, and I don't like to have it ill done. The fear of Voltaire here is comical. The Witts all tell you the most odious stories of him, but make court to him.<sup>135</sup>

According to Montagu, if Voltaire disliked Shakespeare then he lacked taste and judgement. Voltaire, the sinophile who was incapable of recognising Shakespeare's genius, must be tarnished by a similar absence and incapability in his scrutiny and understanding of the Chinese. He thus hastened Montagu's flight from the Chinese taste: the Frenchman and his colleagues no longer offered Montagu a model of taste and refinement and so, for Montagu, the popular delight in all things Chinese no longer served as a symbol of cosmopolitanism.

### Conclusion

Elizabeth Montagu, a master of managing appearances, realised the importance of ornamenting the self and the representative of the self, the home, in different ways according to audience. She recognised that objects possessed a complex series of cultural significations to be read through the filter of the audience's prejudices. Her Chinese room was a liminal space between public and private, in which symbols of intimacy such as the toilette were hidden in plain sight. The adoption of the Chinese mantle reinforces Montagu's uneasy and complicated relationship with identity and the authentic self, reinforcing the idea that 'privacy is in some way authentic and is itself illusory, with every exposure precipitating yet another obfuscation'.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, quoted in Huchon, p.199.

<sup>136</sup> Chico, *Designing Women*, p.16.

In different letters, she presents her attitude to the Chinese aesthetic as variously passionate, playful, condemnatory, self-deprecating, and bored. Her adoption of a Chinese mantle is a tool of loose signification, to be given signification by Montagu in her chosen attitude towards it. Her early forays into the Chinese aesthetic marked her as a fashionable lady with a cosmopolitan outlook, creating a space in which foreigners and English people alike socialised comfortably. The association of the Chinese aesthetic with the French, and particularly Voltaire and salon culture, meant that when Montagu moved from admiration and emulation of to independence from French influence, the association helped cool her attitude to the style à la Chinois and its evolution into the rococo.

In Montagu's opinion, the eye of imagination 'looks through the perspective of ages with sacred veneration on objects celebrated in history, or immortalized in verse' and so, lacking the anchor of understanding through a known history and literature, Chinese objects were thus divorced from the possibility of sacred veneration.<sup>137</sup>

Because Chinese objects have a less concrete signification or associated symbolism than classical objects or figures, the Chinese aesthetic offers something liberating: Montagu could still be present and identifiable beneath the Chinese pomp. She could attract the eye and attention with excessive display without becoming something else. By comparison, when dressed as a Muse, her body adopts the connotations of the Muse: a clear, historic association with literature, art, intellectual creativity, anchoring her to a specific and known history and literature. The Josse does not possess such obvious signification, as, unlike classical images, its location within its culture of origin was largely unknown as the literature and histories of the Far East were still unfamiliar in the mid-

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<sup>137</sup> Lord Kames, in *Bluestocking Feminism*, pp. 176-177.

eighteenth century.<sup>138</sup> Montagu is ‘so little [able] to pretend’ to inhabit the image beyond a superficial dressing up that it allows her to ‘shine forth’ and so have her own self highlighted more strongly, rather than subsume her identity into the dominant signification of the neo-classical. Montagu’s conflicted attitude to the Chinese taste was ultimately due to the tension that she recognised between the semi-illicit appeal to fancy and playfulness of the Chinese aesthetic, with its lack of determined signification, and the temporary adoption of a Chinese mantle versus the serious intellectualism, which was grounded by a clear code of symbols and meaning established within a Euro-centric system of education that venerated ancient civilisation.

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<sup>138</sup> Almost nothing was known of Chinese literature with the exception of some French translations and Thomas Percy’s *Hau Kiou Choan* (1761) and *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese* (1762) until the work of William Jones in the 1790s.

## Chapter Two

### Two Elizabeths and the Chinese Taste at Erddig House

Erddig, or Erthig, House witnessed its zenith during the proprietorship of Philip Yorke I (1743-1804).<sup>1</sup> Philip Yorke inherited the house from his father Simon Yorke I in 1767, living and working there until his death in 1804.<sup>2</sup> A moderately wealthy country squire, a Justice of the Peace and an MP, in possession of an income of £1000 a year, Philip Yorke wished to marry Elizabeth Cust, the sister of his good friend, Brownlow, and the daughter of Sir John Cust of Belton. However, John Cust decreed that his daughter needed to marry someone with an income of at least £5000 per year and so Philip despaired of marrying Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup>

Philip wrote to Brownlow Cust on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1768: 'I have already finished the last improvement of this Estate; an advance quite adequate to my Expectations [...] I see nothing insupportable, if it brings me in the end nearer to one I love dear than myself'.<sup>4</sup> Philip regarded his efforts as an improver as part of increasing his income and creating a suitable home to which he could bring his bride. At last, an additional inheritance from Philip's wayward maternal uncle, who died of gout and probable alcoholism, softened John Cust, who agreed that, although Philip Yorke had not reached the target of £5000, the happiness of his daughter, who returned Philip's love, was more important. Philip was able to marry Elizabeth Cust in 1770, and Elizabeth's dowry and Philip's inheritance helped finance the alterations the couple were to make at Erddig.

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<sup>1</sup> Erddig is the Welsh spelling used today; Erthig is the Anglicised spelling used during the eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Philip and Simon became the only choice of name for the first born male for next 120 years, hence the need to number them.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Griffiths, *Philip Yorke: Squire of Erthig* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 2005), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Yorke to Brownlow Cust, 24 September 1768, Wrexham, Flintshire Record Office, Records and Archives Collection, Erddig MSS. D/E/895. All further letters and documents associated with Erddig are from this archive.

Elizabeth's arrival heralded great change: Philip's mother, Dorothy Yorke, quit the house to move to Newnham, London, with her maid servant Elizabeth Ratcliffe, known as Betty, and Elizabeth imprinted her aesthetic identity on the house, which she achieved through her active participation in the improving works.

A second, more unusual narrative is associated with Erddig, which is the record of the servants. Successive Yorkes kept a family dossier of records, letters and personal mementoes in the aptly named 'family bible', and they incorporated the letters and dealings of a number of their servants. Images of servants were made and displayed, firstly in oils and pastels and later in sepia photographs, accompanied by affectionate verses which were first written by Philip Yorke I under the title 'Crude Ditties', establishing a tradition which continued into the twentieth century. Whilst the Erddig relationship with its servants should not be romanticised, as there was very much a division between upstairs and downstairs, the detailed accounts and communications of a range of positions during a hundred and fifty year period of the house's occupancy offers a fascinating source of research.

Although proprietorial and paternalistic, Philip and Elizabeth showed some affection for their servants. When living with Dorothy Yorke in Newnham, with additional stays in Bath, Betty Ratcliffe wrote to her employers and to the wife of John Caesar, the foreman, revealing a reciprocal concern and affection for the house and its inhabitants. Betty occupied a rare and privileged position at Erddig as, although she was a house-maid, the family permitted and even encouraged Betty to explore her creative talents. The daughter of a clock maker, John Ratcliffe, whose own ornate grandfather clock stands in the hallway at Erddig, Betty Ratcliffe proved prodigiously talented in a variety of arts and crafts. Friends of the Yorke family would even demand commissions, as Philip's sister Anne Jemima records in a letter to her brother:

Mr Pennant has beg'd of Mamma to let Betty Ratcliffe copy (sic) for him from a print, the youngest of Lord Hardwicke's Daughters. Betty would be much oblig'd to you if you would get a sheet of the



finest grain'd white Vellum, and send it down by the Fly as soon as possible.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, Betty felt able to ask for the best working materials; admittedly, it was for a commission for a lord, but she was nonetheless given access to excellent supplies. In a subsequent letter, Anne writes, 'Little Betty is very busy about her Drawing & it will be very soon, the reason it was not done before the vellum is come safe'.<sup>6</sup> The use of the diminutive 'Little' is paternalistic; however, the family gave her silver gilt, shell and papier-mâché masterpieces, the Roman temple and the Chinese pagoda, a privileged place of display on the first floor. The temple and pagoda were on show variously in the library and hallway, presented in specially commissioned wood and glass carved display cases. Betty's other work was displayed on the walls of the nursery and in the hall of the second floor, where the children and key servants had their bedrooms.

Betty was the main housemaid to Dorothy, Philip Yorke's mother, with whom she had a generally caring and close relationship. Anne Jemima, who was staying with her mother Dorothy, wrote to her brother Philip to tell him that 'We have been sadly frightened by Betty Ratcliffe having been dangerously ill but thank God the Doctor thinks her in a very good way at present, Mamma thinks the waters agree with her.'<sup>7</sup> The effort the family exerted showed an unusual level of concern and reaction, allowing her to bathe in Bath in order to recuperate. Dorothy Yorke also expressed sympathy for Betty upon hearing Betty's mother was ill, as she wrote to her son on May 30 1769, 'Poor Betty Ratcliffe[...] how her mother in a very declining way puts me in fear of losing Betty. Sad stroke that will be'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anne Jemima Yorke to Philip Yorke, 10 May 1768, Wrexham, Flintshire Record Office, MSS Erddig D/E/895.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Jemima Yorke to Philip Yorke, Erddig, 10 June 1768, MSS Erddig D/E/895.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Jemima Yorke to Philip Yorke, Bath, December 1768, MSS Erddig D/E/895.

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy Yorke to Philip Yorke, 30 May 1769, MSS Erddig D/E/895.

Betty's primary role was as care-giver and assistant, valued but nonetheless still an employee.<sup>9</sup> Her loyalty to Dorothy coloured Betty's response to the incomer Elizabeth, which she regarded with suspicion, and she felt uncomfortable with the changes being undertaken at Erddig at the hands and behest of Elizabeth Yorke. Betty expressed these concerns in a letter to the steward John Caesar's wife:

I fancy there are great alterations making at poor dear Erddig, so many fine things, will greatly add to its former beauty[...] I think you wou'd hardly know Newnham, now the Cupola is taken down and the house stript of its furniture, tho here is still plenty of good things, surely Erddig is very full at present, when I come down, I must go there to pack up my Mistress's things, for certainly they will want the Garret, I cannot yet tell exactly when I shall come [...] [I] shall be sorry to leave my Mistress, be so kind as give my best respects to any of my old friends, who are so kind to ask after me.<sup>10</sup>

Betty enjoyed little independent movement: she travelled where Dorothy did, a surrogate child who must ask permission to visit her ill mother, but who also must undertake a care-giving role and take responsibility for the running of the household. The reference to 'poor dear Erddig' emphasises her affection for the house. The reference to the objects ordered by Elizabeth to be removed from London to Shropshire, and the contrasting emptiness of her mistress' former residence, reveals Betty's greater loyalty towards the former mistress of Erddig. The letter is a record of unstable female domestic security: the dowager wife and mother is displaced when the son's wife arrives, and must sacrifice material wealth and goods to the incomer. The aggressiveness of the 'strip[ping]', and the barrenness it connotes in contrast to the concomitant fullness of Erddig, reflects the status of each woman's fertility.

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<sup>9</sup> Philip Yorke habitually underpaid his staff, believing that good working conditions and a kind master made up for paying approximately one third less than the average wage. It did not: his foreman, John Caesar, left in disgrace after decades of working at Erthig, as it was found that he was creaming a healthy percentage from the bottom line at Erthig. See Eric Griffiths, *Philip Yorke: Squire of Erthig*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Betty Ratcliffe to Mrs Caesar, Newnham, 12 September 1771, MSS Erddig D/E/204.

The woman is a transitory feature of the home: a generational interloper whose purpose is to provide an heir until an incoming, fertile woman eventually replaces her.

The new wife, Elizabeth, also refers to this upheaval, writing to Philip to say, ‘I daresay Mrs Yorke [Philip's mother in London] will have pleasure in giving up the Place to you, and me[...] [though] quitting must be irksome’. Elizabeth reflects the perception of rightness of the transition as well as a little naivety about the extent of the impact the departure would have on Dorothy Yorke, which is hinted at more strongly in Betty’s letter.<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Yorke immediately began focusing on remodelling the interior of Erddig, particularly the bedroom and Chinese room. Her emphasis on the Chinese taste was simultaneously a demarcation of her separate identity from her husband and his family, who tended to emphasise a preference for the neo-classical done on a tight budget, yet Elizabeth also took inspiration from some items that had long been in the house, relocating Chinese items that had been in the house for seventy years.<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth defends her decision to spearhead the redecoration whilst her husband largely concerned himself with the landscaping and exterior remodelling of the house, admonishing her husband in half-seriousness, half-affection: ‘You are such an unfashionable creature’.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901. This bundle of letters is collected under one reference and appear to cover 1770 to 1773, based upon the subjects mentioned. Unfortunately, nearly all of the letters in the bundle are undated.

<sup>12</sup> Philip Yorke originally engaged James Wyatt, the architect and proponent of the neo-classical, and rival to Robert Adam, to rework the front of the house. Yorke ultimately opted for the cheaper and less ornate version designed by a little known architect, Mr Frank. He also landscaped the gardens in a mixture of the style of Capability Brown's open, naturalised vistas, with more formal designs for the kitchen gardens and formal orchard adjacent to the house. Philip reveals his close involvement with the work upon the exterior in a letter to his head steward, John Caesar, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1772: ‘Near to where the Old Willow Plantation grew in the French Mill Meadow stand now five Handsome Trees (viz. A Crab; a Cherry, an Oak, 2 Ash) I would by all means wish these to remain, and altho' they may grow in the Awkward Line of the Old Hedge’. Merlin Waterson, *Servant's Hall: A Domestic History of Erthig*, (London: Routledge, 1980), p.46.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.] MSS Erddig D/E/901.

Whilst Philip Yorke commissioned a false neo-classical front for his house and reengineered the level at which the front entrance stood, Elizabeth created delicate, intimate and fantastical interior scenes that entertained and occupied the eye. Her difference in taste, and her love of fashion, is reflected in her mild disappointment, expressed to her brother, that 'I wish [Philip] [...] lik'd novelty as well as I do'.<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth envisaged her alterations to Erddig as an assertion of belonging and proprietorship. Staking a claim in the property by defining and controlling her space, individuated physical spaces were 'indelibly associated with the potential for individualism'.<sup>15</sup>

Her desire to be involved in the process is marked in a letter in which she chided her husband, 'I thought we had agreed before we last parted no alterations shou'd be made [...] till [I] came down'.<sup>16</sup> Philip retains authority whilst Elizabeth feels frustrated at changes being made in her absence. In turn, Elizabeth is more assertive and controlling when she writes to the foreman John Caesar:

If Mr Turner the architect is at Erddig, you will give him the enclosed letter and shew him the alteration I wish'd to be made, of a Door into the little Room (next to the Yellow Bed chamber) from the passage leading to Mr Yorke's Study. If Mr Turner has left you, you will keep the letter by you [...] & you will reacquaint me what he said when he left Erddig.<sup>17</sup>

Caesar is a go-between or intermediary, passing on exact instructions on the behalf of his mistress; Elizabeth achieves authority and control by proxy.

Although Philip Yorke made extensive alterations to the exterior of the house and the gardens, the work inside the house was undertaken in conjunction with, and largely directed by, Elizabeth. She took charge of the purchase of sofas, chairs and other aspects of the decoration, writing 'I hope that I shall not find Walls or

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Chico, *Designing Women*, p.15.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to John Caesar, 4 April 17-- [illegible], MSS Erddig D/E/569.

any obstructions rais'd in my Dressing Room. I have (perhaps not done wisely) not cut my Coat according to my Cloth, but my Cloth to my Room'.<sup>18</sup>

Her play on a proverb reveals her recognition of the parallel between dressing herself and her room, although here identifies the latter as a greater test more fraught with problems. Both are representative of female agency, but decorating a room has more serious financial implications. Elizabeth was determined not to meet 'any obstructions', both literal and metaphorical, as she found during the course of the works that she met with some difficulties. She wrote to Philip:

Trades-people of every branch are most tiresome to deal with. I sent several messages after my Chair since I wrote, but not receiving satisfaction, I went myself yesterday, and drag'd Anne with me (for I am nothing without her), all I cou'd get for my trouble was to hear it was impossible to be done; I did set right some mistakes, the Man promis'd me to send the drawing of the Sopha which I wish'd to send you tonight that you might not fancy I had been Idle; it is not forthcoming [...] One must have somebody to scold (as it is a very constitutional Experience) and a Cabinet Maker as well as any whilst I am in the humour (i.e. out of humour) don't expect to escape tho' so distant.<sup>19</sup>

Her desire for a sofa marks Elizabeth as a modern, fashionable woman but also, ironically considering its purpose for encouraging indolence, symbolises her activity. An item associated with the passive seating of women represents her non-idleness.<sup>20</sup> It supports Amanda Vickery's dismissal of the notion that 'women's dealings with material things as [labelled as] a 'category of leisure', domestic material culture as an arena of female vanity, not skill, and shopping

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> According to Michael North, having a sofa marked a woman as up to date with current trends. Michael North, *'Material Delight and the Joy of Living': Cultural Consumption in the Age of Enlightenment in Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), p. 67.

as a degraded female hobby, not unpaid work'.<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth displayed skill, purpose and agency, allowing her adoption of a novel aesthetic to aid her performance of housewifery.

Sometimes preferring new locations for old things above novel acquisition, Elizabeth had the Japan screen, which had resided on the first floor since the 1720s, moved into the State Bedroom.<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth's re-use of the screen not only demonstrates thrift but also a way of accommodating her novel taste with symbols of the house's history. She could mark her own identity in the intimate space of the bedroom, yet orchestrate synthesis between the house's past and present aesthetic in a manner that affirms her position as both the new wife and continuing the history of reproduction and primogeniture.

Her letters give a clear account of Elizabeth's social superiority as well as her occupation, or preoccupation, with the works. Her account of her emotional manner, with a wry threat of emotionality towards her husband, is a performance of female sentiment that belies Elizabeth's determined and efficient management, which is revealed further in a subsequent letter:

There are many things I wish fix'd; I don't mean to distress you tho' I wou'd have you think of them, as I think we may be greatly agitated by a variety of business meetings at once. The House is a material business, and I wish it be enquired about by all sides.<sup>23</sup>

Actively seeking a central role as a hub of information at the centre of domestic activity, Elizabeth Yorke seems a witty and bright woman, yet she preoccupies herself wholly with the material rather than the abstract of intellectual thought.

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<sup>21</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 164.

<sup>22</sup> The association between the Chinese and women is highlighted in the record of the screen's arrival at Erddig: a letter from Elihu Yale to Joshua Edisbury, the original owner of Erddig, states that he will send a Japan screen for his wife as in thanks for the receipt of 'four Rundletts of Scundpatch Ale; an honour [he] could no ways expect nor hope'; he continues, 'Therefore, begg you and your Good Wife's acceptance of[...] vessels, fil'd with our Soft Mango Atchar to yourself, send to her a Japan Skreen'. Joshua Edisbury to Elihu Yale, Fort St. George, 20 April 1682, MSS Erddig D/E/68.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

In her one comment on the library, she remarked, 'I wish you to employ yourself, as I am persuaded it will be of service to your house, with regards to the Library, I shall not send you a list, for you wou'd stir about; if you shou'd chance to pick up some before I return, I beg amongst them remember the good Booke'.<sup>24</sup>

It shows that her husband, who researched his Welsh ancestry and considered himself to be something of an academic, was regarded as the authority over the realm of intellectual endeavour, the library. Elizabeth engages her mind with the things that fall within her realm and so only considers the moral well-being of the family by exhorting the purchase of the Bible.<sup>25</sup> She was working under what Amanda Vickery refers to as the 'ideal conditions' of a 'mistress' labour [as] more managerial than manual', for 'a house well-regulated was a subtly burnished badge of gentility'.<sup>26</sup> Yet, despite evident clarity of thought and wit, the possibility of stretching her active mind beyond the remit of the domestic is untenable.

Elizabeth frequently displays strength of character and possession of thought independent from the guidance of her husband, signing one of her letters with characteristic wry humour: 'God be with you, dear Philip, think of me constantly as your affectionate, faithfull and (dis)obedient Wife, Eliz. Yorke'.<sup>27</sup> In her subscriptive persona, Elizabeth is attempting to construct a version of herself in her husband's mind on which he may 'think', but the parentheses highlight the playful insincerity of her insertion. Elizabeth's method of signing off her letter presents her behaviour, directing the decoration of their marital home, as an appropriately minor arena for independent disobedience that is neither genuine nor worrisome recalcitrance.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Writing to John Caesar, Elizabeth Yorke reveals her management of that other female domain, the dairy: 'You have been so regular with my Dairy accounts that I have not much to say [...] I wish my Dairy to produce more plentifully, the quantity of Butter does not sound much for eight Cows. I wish there may be a good reason but I rather fear some of my Cows are going off. I did not learn when the last Cow came in what became of the calf. I wou'd have you put down the Price of Butter when it is Potted in the same manner when it is sold as it must all be charged to the Dairy account. I shall start my Books up in a month for Mr Peregrin to look them over. I shou'd be glad to hear how the Poultry you are to what method they are kept and the quantity of Eggs sold per Week or Fortnight'. Elizabeth Yorke to John Caesar [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

<sup>26</sup> Amanda Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, pp.158; 160.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

The decorating of the home offers a microcosmic version of the contrasting restrictions of women and the liberty and control of men, who were improving landscapes and shaping a nascent empire. Interior decoration seems a mere illusion of authentic freedom. The chimerical qualities of the Chinese taste, coupled with the challenges of its authenticity, make it an entirely appropriate aesthetical choice for an activity that was so much an inauthentic version of freedom and free choice. Elizabeth Yorke expresses her belief in creative possibility as she writes to her husband on the subject of the Chinese Room and, especially, her dressing room attached to the State bedroom at their house Erddig in Wrexham. She declares that, 'I have already fancy'd the size of my room, the Paper up and even ma Petite Personne seated in the Midst'.<sup>28</sup> She places herself, the final diminutive decoration, in the centre of the room: at once submissive in her smallness yet dominant in her central position, the ultimate decorative object.

The striking aspect of the location of these papers is their emphasis on privacy: away from the Yorke's London home, in a Chinese room that is so tiny as to be little more than a cabinet and decorated with an intimate pastel portrait of Elizabeth's first two children. The wallpaper demands intimate examination. Not intended to awe the viewer, but to occupy the eye with detail, the Chinese room's wallpaper is actually a series of vignettes of Chinese life depicted in oval tableaux of no more than half a metre in diameter, serving as narratives in miniature. They show families dining together and working in and outside of the house, symbols of domesticity and an evocation of universal familial behaviour, at once alien yet familiar. The Yorkes ran out of the imported paper and so had an English artist make up three ovals on the final panel and although the artist attempted to replicate the style of the paper, there is a marked difference in the images, demonstrating that image and economy prevailed over authenticity. The Chinese wallpaper not only performed a service by delighting the eye and reward close attention, it coded the feminine interior space of the little Chinese room as a place of virtuous domesticity and family duty. The appeal of the foreign scenes lies in the presentation of home-life, rather than being an attempt to recreate China or a Chinese environment accurately.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



Elizabeth's material efforts were a method of distracting from her limited opportunity as a woman. Her interior decoration so preoccupied her that she wrote with surprise:

Only think I quite forgot (being over-whelm'd with businesss) to inform you of a great Disappointment; it is with deep sorrow I tell you now, the Masquerade is deferr'd till next year, I don't know at present where next year is, but if it ever shou'd arrive... I shall look upon your promise of attending me, as good.<sup>29</sup>

The letter reveals how infrequent such social events were and, ultimately, that Elizabeth's exertions do not wholly prevent ennui. Whilst focusing on choosing fabrics, designing her rooms and managing her dairy, there are clear restrictions to her life, as one letter to her husband notes Elizabeth's need to find a coachman so that she could resume travelling locally:

I wish I cou'd send you a lively chatty letter but I feel myself dull and stupid: thank God I have no fresh reason to occasion it, consequently it is only the dullness of an hour I am sorry it shou'd be allotted to you, it will be too great a compliment to say it may pass off before I finish this.<sup>30</sup>

The otherwise lively and active Elizabeth not infrequently reveals sadness exacerbated by loneliness. Philip Yorke was an MP and travelled on business, leaving Elizabeth feeling isolated and fantasising about her own ability to travel, telling her husband, 'I write, just to tell you I can not write. I am in a few minutes going to set off for another Country, as you are resolv'd never to return'.<sup>31</sup> The irony of her half-joking, half-serious words, which express her loneliness without

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<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

her husband, is that the furthest she can travel is to her Chinese room unless she is with her husband.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, Elizabeth's furniture became her surrogate traveller: 'I have set my mind upon having the Chair set out upon its Journey next Saturday; I am peculiar in one things, I hate to be disappoint'd'. Similarly, she sent a representative in her place as she 'took the liberty to send Sam [a servant] to [illegible] much afraid he would be lost in the immensity of the Shop, but he executed his enquiries very accurately, & much to [her] satisfaction'.<sup>33</sup> Knowing that she was connecting to the outside world of fashion ensured entertainment and preoccupation as well as a greater sense of belonging to a community even when in relative isolation. Elizabeth adopted the Chinese aesthetic as a veneer of amusement and preoccupation that allowed her to stamp her identity on her new home. Elizabeth Yorke wrote about the house that had 'been constantly in [her] thoughts' in a manner that unconsciously echoes the sentiments of Elizabeth Montagu: 'Beauty will always attract the attention of the Eye first'.<sup>34</sup> A beautiful house reflects the beauty and rightness of its inhabitants. It is a way for women to be seen and attract attention through indirect scrutiny: rather than looking at the woman, the beautiful room becomes a carefully staged synecdoche for the woman herself.

### **A Servant's View of China**

In contrast to the organisation of beauty that Elizabeth Yorke facilitates in her home, Betty Ratcliffe was a creator of beauty, responsible for a wide range of drawings and objects that elided art and craft. Of particular note were her Roman temple and Chinese pagoda, both rendered in shell, mother of pearl and silver gilt. Made six years apart, Betty was unconcerned by competing discourses on the different qualities of the Classical and the Oriental, but instead was more interested in the interpretation and execution of beauty. In fact, rather than

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<sup>32</sup> When she is with her husband, Elizabeth does visit Bath and London, but they are rare trips in between multiple pregnancies.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Yorke to Philip Yorke [n.d.], MSS Erddig D/E/901.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

subscribing to Montagu's vision of the neo-classical being overtaken by the oriental, Betty Ratcliffe's first effort was the pagoda in 1767, followed by the Temple in 1772.<sup>35</sup>

The only published study of the item, by Merlin Waterson, proposes that the pagoda was based on the engraving by William Chambers of his gardens and buildings at Kew. Waterson notes, 'Ratcliffe changed the scale of the pagoda reducing it from ten stories to six, and enlarging certain features such as the bells, which in fact Chambers omitted from the engraving of the pagoda as executed'.<sup>36</sup> Waterson observes that 'there is something of the same whimsical delight in Betty Ratcliffe's interpretation of Chambers's pagoda that one finds in the paintings of Thomas Robins', and that her work evokes a similar fashion for Chinoiserie temples and fretwork fences which Betty may have seen when, in 1765, 1768 and in 1770, Dorothy Yorke visited Bath with Betty; Robins lived and died in the city, so they could well have encountered his work.<sup>37</sup> In fact, there is more than just some similarity: one painting appears to be a clear source of inspiration for the peak of Betty's pagoda, Robin's painting of 'The Chinese Kiosk at Woodside, Windsor'.<sup>38</sup> Despite the acknowledgement of potential influences, Waterson accounts for the addition of the bells as a feminisation of Chambers's pagoda, failing firstly to consider that alterations may have been for technical reasons and secondly that there could have been an additional source of inspiration: the books in the library.

The library in Erddig contained Le Comte's work, *New Memoirs on the Present State of China*, in addition to *Travels of a Missionary to India and China* (1714), Dampier's *Voyage Around the World* (1699), as well as Defoe's *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>39</sup> Chambers's Pagoda at Kew does not have bells; however, there is a

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<sup>35</sup> See appendix (pp.306-307).

<sup>36</sup> Merlin Waterson, 'Elizabeth Ratcliffe: An Artistic Lady's Maid', *Apollo: International Arts Magazine*, 208 (1978): 56-63 (p. 57).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Chinese Kiosk' (c.1752) was shown at the exhibition 'The Garden', held at the Victoria & Albert Museum, 23 May to 26 August 1979. The painting is held by a private collector, although reproductions are available online.

<sup>39</sup> List of books held in the library, [n.d]. MSS Erddig D/E/282.

significant extra detail in Dampier's *Voyage around the World*, an episode entitled 'A Story of a Chinese Pagoda, Or Idol-Temple, and Image', which does refer to a bell at a pagoda: 'There was an old idol-temple [...] [There] stood an old rusty iron bell on its brims. This bell was about two foot high, standing flat on the ground; the brims on which it stood were about sixteen inches diameter'.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, Betty Ratcliffe took inspiration from the wallpaper in the Chinese bedroom: her silver gilt and mother of pearl bird, which has a distinct oriental feel, reflects the shapes of the birds in the images on the Chinese wallpaper.<sup>41</sup> The evidence challenges Waterson's view that 'As with the Pagoda, she treated the scale of [her interpretation of Robert Wood's 'The Ruins of Palmyra' (1753) and] the various architectural features, recorded with such scrupulous accuracy by wood, with a cavalier manner'.<sup>42</sup> There is nothing cavalier about the care and attention that Ratcliffe gave her work, as she drew her inspiration from multiple sources and synthesised them into something unique. She was not, as Waterson argues, attempting a bastardised version of the Kew Pagoda, but creating something individual that was treasured by its creator and its patrons.

The Yorke family ordered specially commissioned stands for Betty's classical temple and the pagoda; the stand for the latter is decorated with silvered dragons and is an excellent example of British-made Chinoiserie furniture. The quality of the stands provided for the objects are testimony to the value that the Yorke family ascribed to the objects that they placed upon their servant's creativity. Merlin Waterson suggests that the dragon-covered stand for the pagoda may have been by Linnell, or at least from his workshop, as there is striking parity between it and a cabinet at Alscot Park.<sup>43</sup> Dorothy Yorke was aware of social transgression occurring, which appears to be a generational concern, for she shares it with Betty's father, John Ratcliffe, the clockmaker:

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<sup>40</sup> William Dampier, *A Collection of Voyages in Four Volumes*, 4 vols (London: Knapton, 1729), I, p. 411.

<sup>41</sup> See appendix (p. 308).

<sup>42</sup> Merlin Waterson, 'Elizabeth Ratcliffe: An Artistic Lady's Maid', p. 59.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 57. Waterson suggests that as the Badminton bed, now in the Victoria and Albert museum, has similar carved dragons, as has the Italian cabinet at Alscot Park which was remounted by Linnell, but no bill for the Erddig stand survives, it can only be tentatively related to Linnell's work.

Betty is at work for you; but pray my dear do not imploy (sic) her in that way again for one year at least, as all her improvements sink in drawings, & make so fine a lady of her then I shall have no service from her [...] for so much is say'd on that occation (sic) [...] few minds like hers [exist?] & a good father's admonitions about her to me was not to set her up so much, You will think me quite the Governante.<sup>44</sup>

The letter is testimony to the perceived rightness of class rigidity and the tension between ladies' skills, and how their adoption serves to create and signify a lady, and, by contrast, a working-class master.

Whilst Betty's strength of imagination is duly recognised, Dorothy and John Ratcliffe share the same anxiety over Betty's skills. Their anxiety reflects the eighteenth-century literary preoccupation with class and class boundaries and demonstrates that skills and behaviours help code class differentiation. In this instance, educating Betty beyond her class problematised her economic and social utility as a servant.

Betty was proud of her achievement, which she reveals in her circumscribed manner of addressing what is to happen to her creations after the death of Dorothy Yorke in 1787. In a letter from Betty Ratcliffe to Philip Yorke, after detailing some of the issues of 'hasten[ing] the men as much as possible, [as] they had no idea so many cases would be wanted, nor upon enquiry did Mr Willock know what you had to be packed', and with the assurance that Betty has determined that the servants 'have only put up the things that you mentioned to us, namely Plate China books linen & Glass [...] they make a great load & there should be people with the Waggon that can be trusted with so many valuable articles', Betty communicates her real concern:

The stand for the Pagoda & Candle stands will all pack in one case  
& the Temple itself in another slight one, if you chuse to have them

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<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Yorke to Philip Yorke, 17 June 1768, MSS Erddig D/E/888.

sent & the thermometer can be put up with them, they wait for an answer about them. We have attended punctually to all the packing, & I hope observed every thing that you wished to have done. My Aunt put up all the books & linen to forward matters as much as might be, & yet we could not take our places with certainty till today for Monday next, no ones has been to look at the house, we hope for the pleasure of finding all things meet your approbation, & that the goods will arrive safe.<sup>45</sup>

Considering there was apparently such a wealth of goods that the workmen had underestimated the packing cases required, and that there is sufficient material to question the need for a second coach, the fact that Betty makes special mention of her Pagoda and Temple suggests that she wanted to ensure their inclusion. It is the only record that reveals, circumspectly, her feelings about the items; she is otherwise silent on the subject.

The Pagoda became a symbol of social transference which could move from the hands of the servant into the situation of the gentry. At the same time, Betty received some advantage through her privileged role as an artist-servant, but she did not enjoy the easy transferability of the objects that she created. This was because, as a woman, she was limited in her options. Her father had been a successful clock-maker, but Betty could not advance beyond her father's position and, instead, was curtailed by her own femininity to produce beautiful but insubstantial ephemera, whose preservation was predicated upon the kindness of her masters and their descendants.

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<sup>45</sup> Betty Ratcliffe to Philip Yorke, 26 April 1787, MSS Erddig D/E/238. The letter refers to packing up the house after her mistress' death.

## Conclusion

The loss felt by Philip upon the death of his wife is expressed in his words in the family bible:

This day at twenty minutes past one, to my irreparable Loss, and very just and great affliction, my dear and honoured Wife, Elizabeth Yorke, departed this life[...] Under the strongest Impression of her End, She supported herself (without complaints) with the greatest Composure, and strength of Mind, and with surprising Recollection as to all such things, as became the awfulness of that Time, and occasion; for in the beginning, and towards the conclusion of her fatal illness, she was free from Delirium. There was a wonderful sweetness in her manners, in her Countenance and Disposition, which engaged, & that very soon, all persons of all ranks; and if any comfort can be derived to my deplorable Condition and that from the very sources of grief itself, she will be extensively, as really lamented: With great chearfulness [sic] of temper (the effect of genuine Innocence) She had a steady, and remitted attention to every humane Duty; was sincere and exact in her Devotions, most diligent in the superintendence, and Instruction of her children, and active, and accurate, in everything which related to her Family business: This much to have chosen to note here (not without many tears) of this most excellent Woman, and in so doing I have weakened, rather than extended her merits; But my sense of her worth, will be best spoken by what I suffer in her death.<sup>46</sup>

Elizabeth had successfully managed her role as wife to Philip, negotiating the limits of her authority and performing within the realms of acceptable ‘(dis)obedience’. She could disobey her husband’s preference for the neo-classical in the decoration of the Chinese bedroom and the Chinese closet and reprimand and exert her will over trades-people, but did not transgress the borders

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<sup>46</sup> MSS Erddig D/E, ‘The Family Bible’, Erddig, 31 January 1779.

of their home alone, even when stricken with boredom or in the middle of arranging the latest addition to their home décor.

In contrast to the elevated and puzzling status of Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Yorke's lively and entertaining epistolary exchanges reveal a gentlewoman managing her equally genteel household. However, Yorke shares in the idea that decorating the interior was akin to claiming territory and so, by adopting a Chinese aesthetic for reasons of fashion and in contrast to her husband's interest in the neo-classical, Elizabeth Yorke could stake a claim on the domestic interior, asserting her position as the new woman of the house. She re-models the interior to her own vision, literally reshaping the domestic landscape.

Despite her flirtations with assertiveness, the way in which Elizabeth works in tandem with her husband is an expression of matrimonial harmony: their unity and closeness as a couple was assisted by their joint undertaking. The wealthy and gentrified Elizabeth engages with tradesmen and builders, and focuses on successful acquisitions. For her, this is indeed a 'material business', and her imagination focuses more upon the ownership and delineation of the space, of being in place in the middle of her self-selected interior. By contrast, Betty has a much more intense focus for her creative energy in the miniaturisation of large-scale architecture. She adds a rococo twist, with delicate whites and spindly edges, to oriental and neo-classical examples of buildings. Betty is unbound by concerns of fashion that so preoccupies Elizabeth and, instead, is liberated in her expression of beauty and creativity.

Elizabeth Yorke's materialism marks her as a product of a changing economy. As a female consumer, she exerts agency in decision making. The Chinese aesthetic becomes a tool for exhibiting this control over decisions and ownership of space: the beauty and detail of the wallpaper in the Chinese dressing room and the bedroom go unremarked; Elizabeth's focus is upon her placement within that space and her acquisitiveness give her a system of signs to communicate her belonging. Rather than showing her own particular love of the style or interest in the wider cultural context from whence it came, the Chinese aesthetic conveys



Elizabeth's taste as not being that of her mother-in-law or her husband. Orchestrating the style is a form of preoccupation that temporarily arrests ennui.

Contrastingly, 'Little Betty' proves herself a competent researcher of information about the history and various images of the Pagoda, not limiting herself to mere replication of images like Elizabeth does. Instead, Betty creates an expressive and original piece that shows a fusion between Oriental imagery and her own imagination as the double binds of class and gender are temporarily remodelled in her rendering of the Pagoda and her Chinese bird.

The domestic arena was undeniably a contested site which women had to negotiate carefully and with skill, assisted or damaged by a woman's communication of her values and status through her choice of clothing, objects and words. The adoption of a Chinese mantle(piece) was imbued with potential for expression and creativity, but also fraught with the danger of signification that had to be managed and contained by its female executors; the Chinese aesthetic could complement and complicate codes of ornamentation. Still further, the engagement with a Chinese aesthetic helps to problematise the interrelationship between body, clothing and space: the dressing-room has a clear purpose in which the dresser enrobes her body with her chosen outfit and accessories. In the same way that dress was a 'resonant and pertinent symbol for the female consumer', so was the female space in the dressing- and, sometimes, bedroom.<sup>47</sup>

There is a distinction between the satirical poems of Pope and Swift allowing readers to 'peer [...] into the dressing room [and objectifying] women within now predictable terms of sexuality and theatricality' and the exertions of women who could control tightly the access to these intimate spaces.<sup>48</sup> In the case of Elizabeth Yorke, the physical limitations of her tiny Chinese room ensured that only two or three people could intrude and the space became one of great intimacy, displaying pastel portraits of her children and housing her writing desk. By contrast, Elizabeth Montagu delighted in the fecundity of her room, populated with

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<sup>47</sup> Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire*, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Chico, *Designing Women*, p. 209.

‘hundreds’, which was at odds with her presentation to her cousin of the barrenness of her Oriental décor.

Both Elizabeth Montagu and Yorke negotiated with or reported to their husbands about the arrangements of their Chinese rooms, rather than being confined to soliciting their permission. For Montagu, this marked the opening up of her decorative and social possibility which accelerated as her husband aged and then died; for Elizabeth Yorke, her efforts represented the pinnacle of her assertion of agency. Still, in the same way the symbolic power of dress could ‘variously connote wealth, social status, sexuality and moral probity’, but that the many and competing anxieties that dress can generate, not least because clothing has the power to convey meaning and unintelligibility and to repress and transgress, interior decoration could have the same communicative power.<sup>49</sup>

The dressing-room is a liminal space that is simultaneously public and private, and the female arbiter could control access to it. The symbolic power of the decoration could be heightened or lessened according to the space’s position on the public-private spectrum. The Chinese aesthetic was not straightforwardly illegitimate. Divorced from its origins and without popularised history or literature to give it perceived substance and, in the case of Elizabeth Yorke, readily copied by English artists and artisans, meant that the women adopting a Chinese mantle were emancipated from fixed meaning and instead could impose their own interpretation upon it. The freeing ‘somethingness’ that women identify in the Chinese aesthetic, which Goldsmith derides so caustically, exists precisely because his imagined confrontation with a real Chinese could not occur. Goldsmith himself had to dress up in a Chinese mantle in order to attempt, falsely, to reveal the nothingness of female taste and ideas.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire*, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> In the only instance when an interaction between Chinese man and Englishwoman did occur, between Whang Atong and a few elite ladies including the Duchess of Portland, the women absolutely capitalised on the opportunity to acquire real knowledge by asking for help with translation of Chinese writing, amongst other favours.

# Science

## Introduction

### Scientific Curiosity and China

Dr Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) defined science as 'knowledge'; 'certainty grounded on demonstration'; 'art attained by precepts, or built on principles'; 'any art or species of knowledge', a definition derived from the etymological origin of science, the Latin for knowledge *scientia*.<sup>1</sup> This section addresses the pursuit and exchange of knowledge about Chinese objects and literature and the ways in which this enhanced the emerging practice of sinology. I also consider the effect of Chinese material and literary influences on evolving 'Enlightenment [...] cultures of science', which Paul Elliot defines as 'the production, experience and dissemination of scientific ideas and practices and changing conceptual spaces'.<sup>2</sup> Krystof Pomian has described the seventeenth and long eighteenth centuries as the 'Age of Curiosity' and an 'exuberant world of curiosity', fuelling the production and consumption of knowledge. What emerged was an 'alliance between curiosity and wonder, which had long been associated with a scientific spirit and appreciation of the workings of nature, [bringing] curiosity into the territory of natural philosophy and natural history'.<sup>3</sup>

Barbara Benedict envisions the evolution of curiosity from the seventeenth to eighteenth century as a shift from regulating curiosity to consuming it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: A. Millar, 1766).

<sup>2</sup> Paul A. Elliot, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science* (London: L. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), p. 281.

<sup>3</sup> Paula de Vos, 'Commerce, Curiosities, and the Circulation of Knowledge' in *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500–1800*, ed. by Daniela Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Kristin Huffine (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p.74. Although predominantly focused on the Iberian Empires, the comments about eighteenth-century culture of curiosity and scientific discovery are set in a wider European context.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

The cultural impact of attitudes to consumption indicates intersection with the luxury debate, matching what Elliot has observed as trends in the history of science about which ‘post-modernist and post-structural scepticism towards traditional historical narratives has stimulated greater attention to the complexities, contingencies and divergences of phenomena as complex as identities and affiliations’.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, there existed an enlightenment belief in the progression of the West as the Islamic world declined, resulting in Persian luxury and the Orient becoming associated with excess, the sensual and seduction. However, Berg identifies China as exempt from this view:

China was somewhat differently perceived. China was associated not with sensuality and excess, but with ethics, harmony, and virtue [...] [inspiring] Leibniz, then Voltaire and the encyclopaedists to perceive through the prism of Chinese objects their own aspirations to human elegance and refinement. In possessing things Chinese, they sought to access levels of civilisation beyond the market.<sup>6</sup>

In addressing the role of China, or the representations of China and Chineseness, in the production of knowledge and the development of global scholarly networks, this section begins with an assessment of the evolution of epistemologies of knowledge about China and Chinese things from the early eighteenth century. Chapter Three examines the ways in which William Jones assisted the increasing network of intellectual and curious exchange whilst beginning to challenge the ethno- and Euro-centric understandings of the Orient. Examples of early intellectual curiosity about China are documented in the Royal Society’s *Philosophical Transactions*. I will then consider how William Jones represents a departure from the mode of curiosity expressed at the Royal Society, particularly in the unmantling of Chinese poetry for a European audience.

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<sup>5</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Maxine Berg, ‘Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution’ in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, eds. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.229. For discussion of China as virtuous, see Chi-Ming Yang, *Performing China*.

As a result of his efforts, Jones became orientalised by the British public and cast in a mantle of exoticness.<sup>7</sup>

Chapter Four considers Lady and Joseph Banks's efforts to acquire, exchange and present knowledge about Chinese porcelain. Lady Banks was a passionate collector of authentic Chinese porcelain, and her collecting practices took porcelain from mantelpieces and cabinets of curiosity and relocated them in her porcelain dairy. With her husband and sister-in-law, Lady Banks gathered complementary information about her porcelain in a unique text, the *Dairy Book*, which reveals the intersection between male and female spheres of knowledge. Their efforts contribute to the evolution of productions and contexts of knowledge about China and the application of it to British circumstances.

### **The Royal Society and China**

Curiosity about China amongst Europeans has a venerable heritage: after the arrival of Cardinal Ricci in China during the sixteenth century, his reports stimulated interest: the urge to know China accelerated. Volumes such as Louis Le Comte's *Memoirs and observations, topographical, physical, mathematical, mechanical, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical, made in a late journey through the Empire of China* (1697) and Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *The general history of China* (1736) became canonical texts in eighteenth-century Oriental studies, augmented by pamphlets, letters, and reports from those in contact with or located in China. The language barrier, the difficulty of transporting reliable source material, the distance, and overcoming the issues of competition between European states over access to China, in addition to the changing sympathies of successive Chinese Emperors to the European cause, all served to impede the process of achieving comprehensive understanding.

The challenges of travel meant that most Europeans consumed China and Chineseness as arm-chair travellers, fuelling the ethno- and Euro-centric visions of the Far East.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Haruko Momma, 'A Man on the Cusp: Sir William Jones's 'Philology' and 'Oriental Studies'', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 41.2 (Summer 1999): 160-179.

The pre-eminence of the metropolitan enlightenment was contested in ‘the fluid spaces of provincial Georgian science, identity, relative isolation and the continued importance of ascribed aristocratic, gentlemanly and professional status nurturing distinctive public cultures’.<sup>9</sup> As Fontes da Costa notes, at the Royal Society:

The status of a curiosity was, in some cases, due not to the intrinsic rarity of the specimen but to remarkable histories related to them [...] Hence, most of the specimens presented at the meetings shared the exotic and/or rare attributes that recent scholarship has shown to be typical of the objects traditionally displayed in a cabinet of curiosities. In a similar way, the exhibitions were not restricted to natural specimens but also included artificial curiosities.<sup>10</sup>

A discourse of curiosity and rarity prevailed in the language used by the Fellows of the Royal Society, and their correspondents, formalised by certificates of election presented to the Society which illustrate this ‘language of curiosity’.<sup>11</sup> The Royal Society also provided a physical ‘Repository’ for the collection of diverse source material, until it was handed over to the newly-established British Museum in 1779.<sup>12</sup> A group of like-minded intellectuals discussed curiosities

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<sup>8</sup> For further discussion of the arm-chair observer, see Charlotte Bigg’s ‘Frogs on the Mantelpiece: the Practice of Observation in Daily Life’ and Harro Maas’s ‘Sorting Things Out: The Economist as Arm-chair Observer’ in *Histories of Scientific Observation*, ed. by Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 281.

<sup>10</sup> P. Fontes da Costa, ‘The Culture of Curiosity at The Royal Society in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century’, *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 56.2 (May, 2002): 147-66, (p.151).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 148. The certificate for the election of Henry Stevens described him as ‘a gentleman of extensive curiosity’, *The Royal Society’s Certificates of Election*, 18 January 1739; *ibid.*, 20 March 1740.

<sup>12</sup> *The Royal Society’s Certificates of Election*, 18 January 1739; *ibid.*, March 20 1740. See M. Hunter, ‘The Cabinet Institutionalized: the Royal Society’s ‘Repository’ and its Background’ in *The Origins of Museums: the Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-century Europe*, eds. O. Impey and A. Macgregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp.159-168; and Michael Hunter, ‘Between cabinet of curiosities and research collection: the history of the Royal Society’s Repository’, *Establishing the New Science:*

and rarefied information and objects from across the globe, accounts of which were then printed in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. This included commentaries on Chinese histories, objects, language, geography, and scientific experiments performed by Europeans in China or Chinese waters. Items which were described but could not be presented to the Society were also considered for publication in the *Philosophical Transactions*. As Elliot suggests, 'Divergence, contradiction, contingency, context and place were important, but only alongside the perception and experiences of international scholarly engagement'.<sup>13</sup> The letters read at the meetings of the Royal Society often gave accounts of various cabinets of curiosities in Europe, such as the Museum Collegii Romani, the King of Poland's collection of rarities, the cabinet of curiosities of Mr Diasquet and the cabinet of curiosities of Mr Jobais in Leyden. The compilation of these various rarities when published in the *Philosophical Transactions* has been described as consciously resembling cabinets of curiosities of the period.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst the ordering of the *Philosophical Transactions* is chronological according to receipt or presentation of the accounts, and so juxtapositions are incidental, the language used to describe different subjects reveal points of parity and divergence.

In a reflection of the effort to create a universal method and lexis of analysis, there is an apologia provided in the postscript of 'An Account of the Kang, or Chinese Stoves, by Father Gramont at Peking, 22 Oct. 1769', in which the authors declare:

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*the Experience of the Early Royal Society* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), pp. 123-244.

<sup>13</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 3. I have used three volumes of the *Philosophical Transactions*: one volume that includes entries from 1698 to 1702; the second from 1750 to 1755; the third is volume 71 from 1781. Possibly reflecting a waning interest in China and/or the success of the Asiatic Society's own publications, by 1802, when William Jones's Asiatick Society was about to publish the sixth volume of the *Asiatick Researches*, the *Philosophical Transactions* contains just two indirect mentions of China in articles discussing gemstones, 'Corundum stone, description of, and its varieties, the oriental ruby, sapphire, &c.' and 'Mr Tennant on the Composition of Emery' in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 91 (1802). By the editions of 1803 and 1804, there are no references to China or the Chinese in the volumes. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 93 (W. Bowyer and J. Nichols for Lockyer Davis, printer to the Royal Society, 1803) and *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 94 (London: W. Bowyer and J. Nichols for Lockyer Davis, printer to the Royal Society, 1804).

<sup>14</sup> P. Fontes da Costa, 'The Culture of Curiosity at The Royal Society', p. 148. See also Barbara Benedict 'Connoisseurship of the Mental Cabinet', *Curiosity*, pp.158-201.

‘If we have expressed ourselves improperly, which would not be very surprising, considering how little we are versed in these matters [...] we are ready to retract whatever may be thought amiss, and to give what further informations (sic) may at any time be desired’.<sup>15</sup>

The *Philosophical Transactions* presents a way of controlling curiosity: it records and monitors it. The following reference to China is listed after an intensely detailed description of Halley’s experiment on Snowdon-hill in the brief ‘Account of a Book, viz.—*Nouveaux Memoires sur l’Etat present de la Chine, par le R. P. Louis le Comte, de la Campagne de Jesus, Mathematician du Roy, enrichi de Figures. Amsterd. 1697, and since translated into English*’.<sup>16</sup> The Snowdon Hill experiment represents a scientific analysis of a verifiable, British locale. It emphasises the specificity of the location through measurement of heights and distances, the relation to other known locations and landmarks: its historic name, the scientific lexis and the record of dates when events took place add layers of familiarity and control. A similar lexis of control through measurement is also adopted in the following report of Du Halde’s work, which describes China through measurement of boundaries and limits.

China is read in comfortable relation to experiences undertaken in far more recognisable locations, returning the unfamiliar into an arena of familiarity through a parallel frame of reference and measurement. Although measuring in nautical leagues rather than the inches and miles of Snowdon, the focus on the measurement of distance and history, listing historical treaties, to construct conceptual limits repeats the methodology of measurement and rendering the unknown familiar:

Its extent is from Canton to Pekin, N. and S. 18°, or 450 leagues; as much from E. to W. and nearly round in figure so that it is near 1400

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<sup>15</sup> *Philosophical Transaction of the Royal Society: Giving Some Account of the Present Undertakings, Studies and Labours of the Ingenious, in Many Considerable Parts of the World*, 61 (London: S. Smith and B. Walford, 1772), p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> See appendix for an account of the experiment (p. 309). *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, from Their Commencement in 1665 to the Year 1800*, 17 vols (London: Royal Society, 1809), IV, p. 174.



leagues about: 55° are the limits settled between Muscovy and Tartary, by the treaty of peace between those kingdoms; so that there are 900 leagues, counting 25 to a degree, of extent from the S. point of the isle Haynan to the extremity of Tartary, subject to China.<sup>17</sup>

Barbara Benedict asserts that ‘empiricism [was seen] as the method of modernity, but its power to capture and collect the world as a jumble of material items seemed to threaten humanistic values’.<sup>18</sup> I believe that collectors were not only seeking through ‘the scientific urge to dissect and classify the physical [...] a new subjectivity’, nor just ‘a selfhood projected outward, explaining phenomena beyond the enquiring self, not reflective except insofar as the self can be objectified as an item for analysis. The self thus expands to occupy the world’.<sup>19</sup> Rather, the reverse occurs simultaneously: curiosity is focused upon return and projected inward, back upon the curious. The review of Le Comte focuses on the fact that the ‘book contains a great number of *curious particulars* relating to the empire of China’ and ‘none of these cruel diseases, the gravel, stone, gout, or sciatica, are known in China’, demonstrating a self-reflexive concern with European diseases and whether they exist abroad.<sup>20</sup> Detailed specifics are emphasised: items are conceptualised and configured in a mental cabinet that possesses distinct boundaries and limitations. The repository is not illimitable, in contrast to the volubility of the unknown Far East. It reinforces the sense that distant, voluble China can be subject to control; the ability to interiorise it through quantifiable points of reference returns it to a safely encoded British method of understanding via a comparative framework.

An additional method of discussing China centred on descriptions of goods, their nature and use in which the ordinary and familiar are emphasised above the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Benedict, *Curiosity*, p.116.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Account of a Book, viz.—*Nouveaux Memoires sur l’Etat present de la Chine, par le R. P. Louis le Comte, de la Campagne de Jesus, Mathematician du Roy, enrichi de Figures*. Amsterd. 1697, and since translated into English’ in *Philosophical Transactions*, (1809), IV, p. 176.

extraordinary and exotic. ‘An Account of a China Cabinet, filled with several Instruments, Fruits, &c. used in China: sent to the Royal Society by Mr. Buckly, chief Surgeon at Fort St. George. By Hans Sloane, M. D. N° 246’, which states, ‘These instruments are chiefly those used by the Chinese surgeons, and are very clumsy and inconvenient. They consist of rasors of different sorts, knives, ear-pickers of several shapes, brushes, &c’.<sup>21</sup> The mundanity of this list is emphasised when compared to the effusive language of other narratives such as ‘An Account of a Book.—Histoire des Plantes qui naissent aux Environs de Paris, avec leur Usage dans la Medecine par M. Pitton Tournefort de Academie Royale des Sciences’, in which a detailed and rather reverential review is given of Tournefort’s work on disease and medicine. An equally lengthy ‘Remarks, by Mr. James Petiver, F.RS on some animals, Plants, &c. sent to him from Maryland. By the Rev. Mr. Hugh Jones. N° 246’ describes alien images of creatures through a series of analogies that are insufficient alone in elucidating a whole:

Testudo terrestris Americana, dorso elato [...] is guarded along the back with a round ridge; his head about the size of our horse-bean... his snout not very unlike a parrot's bill, his upper jaw including the under; each foot has four sharp claws like a mouse [...] His whole body exceeds not the half of a large walnut.<sup>22</sup>

Contrastingly, in the description of the China cabinet, its contents are presented as sufficiently analogous that they can be recognised through simple listing of objects, differentiated from the British versions only by their suggested inferiority.

In the next reference to China is made in 1700 in ‘A further Account of the Contents of the China Cabinet mentioned in last Numb. By Hans Sloane, M.D. N° 247’, once again, the items are described, precisely, within the physical and mental cabinet of the curious. Sloane renders the descriptions recognisable in

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<sup>21</sup> Hans Sloane, ‘An Account of a China Cabinet, filled with several Instruments, Fruits, &c. used in China: sent to the Royal Society by Mr. Buckly, chief Surgeon at Fort St. George. By Hans Sloane, M. D. N° 246’ (1698) in *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), XI, p. 324.

<sup>22</sup> James Petiver, ‘Remarks, by Mr. James Petiver, F.RS on some animals, Plants, &c. sent to him from Maryland. By the Rev. Mr. Hugh Jones. N° 246’ (1698) in *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), XI, p. 325.

order to more easily furnish the mental cabinet of curiosity with these items, constraining the foreign object by locating it in and linking it to the familiar. The alien curiousness has been left with the Chinese, bound up in their practices, skills and predilections; the things presented in the cabinet are otherwise safely quotidian objects:

Nail parers and horse grooming kit. I have been assured by Dr. Brown, who has made good observations in the East Indies, that he has been told there by those who have lived in China, that this down or hair is used by them for the stopping of blood in fresh wounds, as cobwebs are with us, and that they have it in so great esteem that few houses are without it [...] Several instruments made for paring the nails, at which the Chinese are very curious and dexterous. These instruments are [...] shaped like a chizzel. One represents a kind of instrument, called in China a champing instrument. It is like a horse's curry-comb, and is said to be used after the same manner, and for the same purposes.<sup>23</sup>

The emphasis is on sameness, mostly minimising difference. In two further accounts by Hans Sloane from 1701 and 1703 of his 'China Cabinet', there are further lists of the physically small and often prosaic items, some 'about the size of a pea' (249); 'four China pencils; with these the Chinese write their letters, as we do with pens'; 'a sheet of brown paper from China'; 'a China hone like ours'; 'a box of several kinds of China ink, with characters on them'.<sup>24</sup> These minutiae of daily life, intermingled with other small Indian objects, plus diminutive items of unknown origin, suggest a curiosity about China and Chinese goods which is literally graspable: easily accommodated on the mantelpiece and in both cabinet and mind. Their similarity to rather than difference from British or European items is emphasised. The foreign object is returned to an Anglo-centric framework of reference in an interiorising of the curiosity and the curio.

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<sup>23</sup> Hans Sloane, 'A further Account of the Contents of the China Cabinet mentioned in last Numb. By Hans Sloane, M.D. N<sup>o</sup> 247' (1700), in *Philosophical Transactions*, (1809), IV, pp. 345-346.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 353.

This pattern continues in later volumes of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*, which focus upon narrow specificities of China, providing little fragments of detailed knowledge. For example, 'On the Knowledge of Geography among the Chinese and of Paper-money current there. By Father Anthony Gaukil, Jesuit. Translated from the French by T. S., M. D., F. R. S. N° 404. Anno. 1750', analyses the practice of using paper money, through a commentary on just 'two paper money-bills [from] the reign of Hongvou. The year of Christ 1368'. Once again, a literally graspable object acts as the conduit through which understanding can be achieved, returning the curious subject, that of the history of the Chinese monetary system, via the object, to the easy possession of the curious individual. Indeed, a criticism levied at the Chinese is that 'their books speak [...] in general, and without sufficiently entering into particulars'.<sup>25</sup> As Elliot has pointed out, the early Royal Society possessed a scientific culture based upon "'technologies of fact creation' and the demarcation of facts, opinions, and implied practices'.<sup>26</sup> The critique in the *Philosophical Transactions* reveals a desire to know and understand detailed and intimate aspects of China, in contrast to the large-scale Chinese interiors being created in the grander houses of Britain.

Revealing a similar desire to know China, the French Jesuits' direct communication with the Society prove that difference of nationality and religion did not affect the Society's interest and instead demonstrates the emphasis upon statistical information. 'A Letter from the Reverend Father Augustin Hallerstein, of the Society of Jesus, Pres. of the Astron. Col. at Pekin in China, to Dr. Mortimer, Dated Pekin, Sept. T8, N. S. 1750', describes Jesuit efforts to map China, which they will not yet send to the Royal Society as, although the emperor gave it the 'most gracious reception', they need to 'make it more accurate', although they refer to specific measurements and distances.<sup>27</sup> They also offer to

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<sup>25</sup> Anthony Gaubil, 'On the Knowledge of Geography among the Chinese and of Paper-money current there. By Father Anthony Gaukil, Jesuit. Translated from the French by T. S., M. D., F. R. S. N° 404. Anno. 1750', *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), X, pp. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Augustin Hallerstein, 'A Letter from the Reverend Father Augustin Hallerstein, of the Society of Jesus, Pres. of the Astron. Col. at Pekin in China, to Dr. Mortimer, Dated

send over ‘Chinese vocabularies’ of their own devising in order to decode the language more easily.<sup>28</sup> A second letter, ‘A Letter from Father Incarville, of the Society of Jesus, at Pekin in China, to the late Cromwell Mortimer... Pekin, Nov. 15. 1751’, discusses:

The leaves and flowers of the varnish-tree, which [Incarville] sent, [that] came from the province of Nan King’, in addition to ‘the toeng yeou [...] an oil, or natural varnish, drawn by expression from the fruits, which he sent’. The bark that was sent is used to produce ‘the best paper in China... The paper made of hemp or straw serves only for wrapping up goods, or to make pasteboard; and that made of the bark of the cotton-plant serves for fans, being less apt to crack than any other white paper.’<sup>29</sup>

The mundane practicality of these very specific products helps to convey China as comprehensible. Plant products, so cheap and located in the mercantile, made ‘a very great trade in China’, are ‘no different from what he saw in the King’s garden in Paris’ (388): the rarefied royal location is at odds with the lowly plant merchandise.<sup>30</sup>

The ‘white wax, produced by certain insects, is a very curious and profitable thing’, and given special status, for the candles produced ‘never emits any smoke’ and ‘the learned therefore use them only’; however, the reader is reminded of the normalcy of their use, employed ‘when [scholars] compose an exercise on their examination for degrees’ (388). Similarly, there is an appeal to the familiar in the

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Pekin, Sept. T8, N. S. 1750’, *Philosophical Transactions* (London: C. Davis for Royal Society, 1753), XLVII, p. 322.

<sup>28</sup> The 1809 compendium derides these efforts by the Jesuits as ‘contain[ing] no real or useful information; but only complaints of the missionaries’ want of means and instruments and information, &c.’ (220). It demonstrates the increasing intolerance for Catholics, the French and China in the early nineteenth-century Royal Society.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Nicolas d’Incarville, ‘A Letter from Father d’Incarville, of the Society of Jesus, at Pekin in China, to the late Cromwell Mortimer [...] Pekin, Nov. 15. 1751’, *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), X, p.388.

<sup>30</sup> As Elliot notes, ‘stimulated by growing British economic and naval power and encounters with lands and people new to western eyes, the numerous exotic specimens acquired for private collections, museums and botanical gardens challenged intellectual orthodoxies’. *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p.1.

comparison of another type of wax to ‘our bee’s-wax, [which] would answer the same purposes with this white wax of China’ (389). The account concludes that ‘what had been told [to the writer of the letter] by one of their missionaries, who had bred them himself, is not sufficient to give a proper idea of them’ (389), articulating the frustrating dependency on distant information being returned.

The text reveals a tension between the fixity of describing the unknown and subjecting it to scrutiny and experiment, and the failures exigent in language attempting to describe something which the audience had not necessarily seen, unless present at the display, and about which the use or nature of the thing presented, the author of the description may not have known. Often, a vision of an object was created in absentia, described by what it is *almost* like but is not. Likewise, the difficulty of naming the unknown is encountered, heightening the sense of fluidity and ephemerality.

In the following account, the challenge of fixing the name of an Oriental plant seems to possess multiple possible and actual uses; the only definite categorisation provided is that it certainly grows in China, although it is also known to grow in other areas too.

Relative to the names of this shrub, by such botanical writers as he had an opportunity to consult [the] first author that gives an account of this plant, is Dr. Plukenet, after him Mr. Petiver, and Mr. Ray; but none of them have given a true botanical name or description, much less referred it to its proper class, order, or genus; and notwithstanding so many [...] specimens... preserved in the botanical collections of Sir Hans Sloane [...] [It] was not further noticed till the ingenious Mr. Miller [...] gave the description and drawing in his Gardener's Dictionary and Figures of Plants, from the plant he saw at Mr. Warner's garden. Mr. Ehret soon afterwards published a [...] figure of it, and Mr. Ellis at last completed the botanical description, in the Phil. Trans. Those gentlemen have mentioned this shrub, under the following names: *Arbuscula Sinensis*, *myrti majoris folio*, *vasculo seminali*

hexagono, ad singulos angulos alis foliaceis munito, quae  
 porrectae vasculi coronam efformant, Umki Sinensibus dicta.  
 Plukn. Amalth. p. 29. Umki, alias Umuy; cujus fructum ad  
 colorem escarlatinum tingendum inservit; florem fert rosaceum,  
 album, hexapetalum. Plukn. Amalth. p. 212. tab. 448. f. 4. Frutex  
 cynosbati fructu alato, tinctorio, barbulis longioribus coronato.  
 Petiv. Mus. p. 498. Ray. Hist. III. p. 233. Jasminum foliis  
 lanceolatis oppositis integerrimis, calycibus acutioribus. Mill.  
 Diet. n. 7. Mill. Fig. 180. Jasminum? ramo unifloro pleno,  
 petalis coriaceis. Ehret. Fig. Gardenia jasminoides. Ellis, Philos.  
 Trans. 1760.<sup>31</sup>

Highlighting networks of knowledge which fluctuated, connecting and disconnecting, these interactions resulted in evolving as well as parallel taxonomies. The challenge of the new was subjecting it to order and sorting the gamut of the unknown and boundless possibilities that it possessed. Ordering represents an attempt to control these alien and exotic things by contextualising them through comparisons with the familiar or quotidian, describing them as domestic goods, or by containing them within examples of British control and success. By 1781, the *Philosophical Transactions* shows an increasing emphasis upon the scientific, rather than the broadly curious: in a list of just four references to China, most are categorised lists of particulars.<sup>32</sup>

The acquisition of knowledge was an active performance and exhibitions at the Royal Society were a further method of reflecting back upon the collector and his collection. Subjectivity is located in the collector, rather than seeking an external, outward-looking and encompassing view of the wider world: the wider world is to be dissected, transported and contained within the strict boundaries of the mental or physical cabinet. Curiosity represented an aspect of the fashionable

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel C. Solander, 'CVII. An Account of the Gardenia. By Daniel C. Solander. M. D. p. 654 (1762)', *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), XI, p. 674.

<sup>32</sup> *Philosophical Transactions* (London: The Royal Society, 1781), LXXI, particularly pp. 90, 110 and 112 for examples of a list of worldwide rivers, a description of the flow of the River Burrampooter and that of the Ava river.

personality. According to Benedict, ‘this new man [...] [was] conquering, collecting, and classifying phenomena from a range of new social, physical, and geographical; worlds, all replete with objects for analysis and control. Language, ideas, even morality itself were reified by print into items for manipulation’.<sup>33</sup>

Benedict identifies the importance of undertaking an intermaterial approach to assessing the nature of curiosity, noting that ‘fashionable curiosity [...] [existed] whether manifest in objects, print, or people’ (71). These anxieties were played out in literature. Her central argument is that, for writers and cultural observers, curiosity signifies ‘cultural ambition’ (23), subverting or exceeding boundaries, particularly in uncovering hidden wonders and explaining the wider world.

Benedict presents eighteenth-century curiosity as corrupting, complicated by a religious-inspired fear of curiosity, which frequently cast a curious person as monstrous. However, in the case of William Jones, he underwent a more complicated process. By challenging the Royal Society with the creation of a rival institution, the Asiatick Society, and by re-locating the centre of Middle and Far eastern studies, Jones challenged the curious arm-chair observer studying his mantelpiece or Chinese cabinet. Furthermore, Jones was ultimately reduced to the mantle that was thrust upon him, of being ‘Oriental’, a term that Jones had rejected in favour of ‘Asiatick’.

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<sup>33</sup> Benedict, *Curiosity*, p. 71.



## Chapter Three

### William Jones and the New Repository for Curiosity

William Jones was a polymath who researched and explored the languages, laws, literature, history, and religion of myriad cultures, in addition to an abiding interest in astronomy, astrology, and botany, and being the master of eight languages and able to read or speak a further twenty-four.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of a successful mathematician, also William Jones, a fellow of the Royal Society in 1712 and Vice President in 1737, who had worked with Edmund Halley and Sir Isaac Newton and under the President George Parker, the second Earl of Macclesfield. Although his father died when he was three, William Jones retained a degree of access to the intellectual elite and associated and corresponded with some of the great Enlightenment thinkers of the age.

As a young man, Jones gained a position as a tutor of the children of the first Earl Spencer, one of the richest and most powerful Whigs in England. Here, Jones received an introduction to politics, was allowed to attend balls at Spencer House and Althorp Hall, and joined in as a near equal, elevated by his exceptional

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<sup>1</sup> The first modern analysis of Jones was A. J. Arberry's short work, *Asiatic Jones: the Life and Influence of Sir William Jones* (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1946), followed in the same year by an essay by A. D. Waley, 'Sir William Jones as Sinologue', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 11.4 (1946): 842-842. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00089862>> [Accessed 11 October 2011]. After Waley, most historiography has generally only made brief mention of Jones's work on China. See Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and *Objects of Enquiry: The Life Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones*, ed. by Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine (New York: New York University Press, 1995). Cannon has provided 'a biography rather than a historical survey of the Orientalism question' (xiii), recording Jones's time in India; his intellectual engagement with China enjoys brief mention. *Sir William Jones 1746-1794: A Commemoration*, ed. by Alexander Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), contains no mention of Jones's work on China. Similarly, Michael Franklin, who has published the most recent work on Jones, focuses on Jones's time in India, with only some reference to his interest in China. Michael J. Franklin, *'Orientalist Jones': Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746-1794* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Published after this chapter was first written, Franklin has also identified the manner in which Jones 'encourages a re-centring of perspective from the hub that is India' (205).

abilities.<sup>2</sup> He also admired the interiors of the great Spencer houses, which embraced neo-Classical lines but were also decorated with fairly extensive amounts of Oriental ware, fuelling the young Jones' work and imagination, both of which were aided by access to the Spencer libraries.<sup>3</sup> An autodidact, Jones supplemented his studies with Persian and Arabic at University College, Oxford, and published four important works within four years, three of which were published before he graduated. Of these, one was *Poems, Consisting of Translations from the Asiatick Languages*, published in 1772, which included a discussion of Chinese poetry.

Through the Spencer household, Jones met Jonathan Shipley, the Bishop of St. Asaph and the first Bishop of Calcutta, and a great friend of Benjamin Franklin, as was his brother William Shipley, who was the founder of various 'societies for the common good'.<sup>4</sup> This included the 'Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce', of which Joshua Reynolds and Samuel Johnson were members, and which acted as a precursor to the Royal Academy of the Arts, which was founded in 1768. Throughout his life, Jones cultivated friends who moved in some of the most important intellectual circles of the eighteenth century. Beginning at Harrow, Jones became close friends with Samuel Parr and William Bennet, later the Bishop of Cloyne, John Parnell, who became Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, in addition to those with whom he corresponded and worked with, including Joseph Banks and William Chambers.<sup>5</sup> Jones was elected to Samuel Johnson's Literary Club and to another that met at the Turk's Head Inn from 1774 until he quit England for India in 1783.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> When he realised that his gentlemanly attributes were somewhat lacking, Jones decided to train in dancing, fencing and equestrian skills in order to ensure he matched the others.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the Spencers's Chinoiserie material was sold at Christie's. The sale consisted mostly of porcelain and lacquerware; some originated from India, but most came from China and Japan, with a few hybrid pieces that demonstrate the commingling of Chinese and European tastes in single objects. *The Althorp Attic Sale plus Spencer Carriages*, 7-8 July 2010, London: Christie's, Sale 7917, [sale catalogue] <<http://www.christies.com/features/2010-june-spencer-house-taste-of-british-history-840-1.aspx>> [Accessed 14 November 2010].

<sup>4</sup> Shipley became an isolated figure in Britain as a supporter of the American patriots in opposition to the British parliament. Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Bramhall House, 1987), p. 480.

<sup>5</sup> Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

In marrying Anna Maria Shipley, the eldest daughter of Jonathan Shipley, Jones was thus further wedded to a wide, liberal, and intellectual circle.

Jones left for India in 1783 and in January of the following year, he sent out a circular letter to a selection of the émigré elite, hoping to establish a Society for the further understanding of Asiatic history, geography, languages, and cultures. Jones believed in creating a society that was interested in the wider eastern world, which included a strong focus on China. Sadly, Jones never had the chance to travel to China, as he died at the relatively young age of forty-seven, from a tropical illness contracted in India. In response to his letter calling for such a society, thirty European gentlemen living in Calcutta gathered on 15 January 1784 in the Grand Jury Room of the old Supreme Court of Calcutta for the first meeting of the Asiatick Society.<sup>7</sup>

Jones articulated a vision of the new society intentionally distanced from the British-bound societies. Unlike Elizabeth Montagu, or Lord Shaftesbury, Jones did not view the Orient as toxic and seeking to replace Classicism.<sup>8</sup> He regarded Oriental ideas, histories, literature and objects as enriching European culture, rather than threatening it with intoxicating novelty:

In bestowing these praises on the writings of Asia, I may not be thought to derogate from the merit of the Greek and Latin poems, which have justly been admired in every age; yet I cannot but think that our European poetry has subsisted too long on the perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions to the same fables: and it has been my endeavour for several years to inculcate this truth, that, if the principal writings of the Asiaticks, which are repositied in our publick libraries, were printed with the usual

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<sup>7</sup> See Om Prakash Kejariwal's *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-1838* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Little has been published about the society's history, although it continues to publish research.

<sup>8</sup> See Lord Shaftesbury, 'Advice to an Author', *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.*, ed. by John Robertson, 2 vols (London, 1900). Shaftesbury views taste as something to be cultivated and that false taste can engender the danger that 'Effeminacy pleases me. The Indian figures, the Japan work, the enamel strikes my eye. The luscious colours and glossy paint gain upon my fancy [...] But what ensues? [...] Do I not for ever forfeit my good relish?' (I, p. 219).

advantage of notes and illustrations, and if the languages of the eastern nations were studied in our places of education, where every other branch of useful knowledge is taught to perfection, a new and ample field would be opened for speculation; we should have a more extensive insight into the history of the human mind, we should be furnished with a new set of images and similitudes, and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate.<sup>9</sup>

The use of the word ‘furnish’ reinforces the idea of dressing language and thought and, in Middle and Far eastern literature, Jones could see a new literary mode opening. Jones’s ideas on boundlessness began to break down the vision of East and West as trapped in dialectic. In the preface to his work of 1772, Jones argued that not only could, and should, Persian and Arabic be taught at European universities, but that texts such as Firdausi’s *Shahnama* could offer as much as the *Iliad*, and that such study could provide a new creative force stimulated by ‘the novelty of the following poems’.

[This] should recommend them to the favour of the reader, it may [...] be agreeable to him to know, that there are many others of equal or superiour merit, which have never appeared in any language of *Europe*; and I am persuaded that a writer, acquainted with the originals, might imitate them very happily in his native tongue, and that the publick would not be displeased to see the genuine compositions of *Arabia* and *Persia* in an *English* dress.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> William Jones, *Poems consisting chiefly of translations from the Asiatick languages: to which are added two essays: I. On the poetry of the eastern nations; II. On the arts, commonly called imitative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1772), pp. 195-196. Likewise, his explorations in theology support this encompassing rather than substitutive view: in ‘A Dissertation on the Gods of Greece, Italy and India’, presented to the Asiatic Society on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1785, Jones took a comparative view of the mythologies of those locales and identifying parallels, showing an unusually equitable attitude to different cultures.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *Poems* (1772), p.1. See *Letters*, ed. by Garland Cannon, II, p. 607.

In contrast to the satirical texts of William Chambers and Peter Pindar, Jones inverts the performance of English literature in Chinese garb and instead believes that translation of foreign texts dresses them in English appearance. Nonetheless, it reinforces the idea that cross-cultural encounters were performances that could have positive effects and that, from small interactions, more significant outcomes could proliferate:

I should not have suffered even the following trifles to see the light, if I were not very desirous of recommending to the learned world a species of literature, which abounds with so many new expressions, new images, and new inventions.<sup>11</sup>

Jones believed all newly introduced literary heritages could provide literature with new metaphorical vehicles and tropes. In a letter to Revczki, dated 4th July 1770, Jones describes the process of translating some Chinese poetry, and his response to it:

When I read the works of Confucius, translated by Couplet and others, I was struck with admiration at the venerable dignity of the sentiments, as well as at the poetical fragments, *which adorn the discourses* of that philosopher. They are selected from the most ancient records of Chinese poetry [...] entitled Shi-king [...] I immediately determined to examine the original [...] [A]fter a long study, I succeeded in comparing one of the odes with the version of Couplet, and analysed every word, or, more properly, every figure in it.<sup>12</sup>

Jones's method of translation, comparing signs in one language with those of another, enhanced his progression towards comparative literature.

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<sup>11</sup> *Poems* (1772), pp.1-2.

<sup>12</sup> *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of Sir William Jones*, IV, p. 38.

As he acknowledges, if he can convey the sense of the poems yet retain a European appeal, creating a literary doubleness, he could introduce the work to students of literature. Nevertheless, he recognised the limitations of direct translation of Chinese figures and so worked his own translation in two versions:

Of this ode, I now send you a literal translation: it is a composition of a wonderful dignity and brevity; each verse contains four words only, hence the ellipsis is frequent in it, and the obscurity of the style adds to its sublimity. I have annexed a poetical version, making every verse correspond with the sense of Confucius; you will judge whether I have succeeded or not [...] [This] philosopher, whom I may venture to call the Plato of China, lived about six hundred years before the Christian era, and he quotes this ode, as very ancient in his time. It may therefore be considered as a most precious gem of antiquity, which proves, that poetry has been the admiration of all people in all ages, and that it every-where adopts the same images.<sup>13</sup>

As Jones observes in his first extended piece on China, from the new centre of India, the Chinese borders are now approximate to his location:

The vicinity of China to our Indian territories, from the capital of which there are not more than six hundred miles to the province of Yu'na'n, must necessarily draw our attention to that ancient and most wonderful Empire, even if we had no commercial intercourse with its more distant and maritime provinces; and the benefits, that might be derived from a more intimate connexion with a nation long famed for their useful arts and for the valuable productions of their country, are too apparent to require any proof or illustration.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 'On the Second Classical Book of the Chinese', *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, sciences and Literature, of Asia*, 2 vols (Calcutta: Manuel Cantopher, 1790), II, p. 195.

Jones envisions a new point from which one can examine the East anew, liberated from the strictures of Euro-centrism. In his first discourse, Jones established his plans for the Society, which contained some innovative attitudes and approaches.<sup>15</sup> William Jones' first presentation to the newly incepted Asiatic Society, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, The Antiquities, Arts, Sciences, and Literature, or Asia, by the President', also known as 'The Preliminary Discourse', delights in the novel recentring he had undertaken:

When I was at sea last August [...] I found [...] that India lay before us, and Persia on our left, whilst the breeze from Arabia blew nearly on our stern. A situation so pleasing in itself, and to me so new, could not fail to awaken a trail of reflections in a mind, which [...] [was] accustomed to contemplate with delight the eventful histories and delightful fictions of this eastern world.<sup>16</sup>

Jones distinguishes between actual presence and his Euro-centric learning. Jones writes from an intermediary position of alterity doubled with western familiarity; he is located in proximity to a plethora of others, yet writing as an Englishman. He suggests that the perpetrator of intellectual curiosity functions as a type of collector, seeking 'objects of enquiry', taking the words from his list of 'Objects of Enquiry during my Residence in Asia'.<sup>17</sup> Kevin R. Brine describes this as Jones's 'intellectual gameplan [and] [...] an important landmark in the origins of Orientalism.

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<sup>15</sup> His arrival had been preceded by William Hastings, Charles Wilkins (1770), Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1772) and Jonathan Duncan (1772), all men who were interested in the study of India, the Middle and Far East and who would later become associated with the Society, but had until that point been more interested in individual study rather than creating an institution via which they could exchange ideas.

<sup>16</sup> William Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, The Antiquities, Arts, Sciences, and Literature, or Asia, by the President', also known as 'The Preliminary Discourse', *The Works of Sir William Jones, with the Life of the Author, by Lord Teignmouth* ed. by Lord Teignmouth (London: J. Stockdale and J. Walker, 1807), III, pp. 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> 'Objects of Enquiry during my Residence in Asia', in *Works*, II, pp. 3-4.

It was an extraordinarily ambitious list of inquiry reflecting the encyclopaedic enthusiasm of the Age of Reason'.<sup>18</sup> The 'objects of enquiry' were later substantiated and publicly orated by Jones when he addressed the Asiatic Society in his 'Second Anniversary Discourse'.<sup>19</sup> He embraces the expansive possibility of the region in his 'Preliminary Discourse':

[The] design [...] [is] to take *an ample space for your learned investigations, bounding them only by the geographical limits of Asia*, so that, *considering Hindustan as a centre* and turning your eyes in idea to the North, you have on your right, many important kingdoms in the eastern peninsula, the ancient and wonderful empire of China with all her Tartarian dependencies, and that of Japan with the cluster of precious islands, in which many singular curiosities have too long been concealed: before you lies that prodigious chain of mountains, which formerly perhaps were a barrier against the violence of the sea, and beyond them the very interesting country of Tibet, and the vast regions of Tartary [...] whose domain has extended at least from the banks of the Iliffus to the mouths of the Ganges: on your left are the [...] provinces of Iran or Persia, the *unmeasured [...] perhaps unmeasurable deserts* of Arabia, and the once flourishing kingdom of Yemen, with the pleasant isles that the Arabs have subdued or colonized; and farther westward, the Asiatick dominions of the Turkish sultans, whose moon seems approaching rapidly to its wane.—By this great circumference, the field of your useful researches will be inclosed; but, since Egypt had unquestionably an old connection with this country, if not with China, since the language and literature of the Abyssmians bear a manifest affinity to those of Asia, since the Arabian arms prevailed along the African coast of the Mediterranean, and even erected a powerful dynasty on the continent of Europe, you may not be displeased occasionally to

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<sup>18</sup> Kevin R. Brine, *Objects of Enquiry: The Life Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones*, ed. by Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p.10.

<sup>19</sup> Jones, 'Second Anniversary Discourse', in *Works*, III, p. 20.



follow the streams of Asiatick learning a little beyond its natural boundary.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to the confinement of the cabinet of curiosity, and the emphasis on particulars made by the Royal Society reports, Jones breaks the imagined borders of the European cabinet and replaces it with an expansive vision of intellectual engagement with the East. Jones advocates a vision of social and academic unity formed through common effort in exploration, in which field holds a double meaning of territory and intellectual sphere:

I could not help remarking how important and extensive a field was yet unexplored [...] [W]hen I considered, with pain, that, in this fluctuating, imperfect and limited condition of life, such iniquities and improvements could only have been made by the united efforts of many, who are not easily brought, without some pressing inducement or strong impulse, to converge in a common point.<sup>21</sup>

Jones acknowledges the instability and uncertainty of existence; he also recognises the ideological awkwardness of the word *oriental*, and prefers a name that emphasises the geographical:

If [...] a short name or epithet be given to our society, in order to distinguish it in the world, that of Asiatick appears both classical and proper, whether we consider the place or the object of the institution, and preferable to *Oriental*, which is in truth a word merely relative, and, though commonly used in Europe, conveys no very distinct idea.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> William Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, The Antiquities, Arts, Sciences, and Literature, or Asia, by the President', in *Works*, III, pp. 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> William Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, The Antiquities, Arts, Sciences, and Literature, or Asia, by the President', also known as 'The Preliminary Discourse', in *Works*, III, pp. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society', pp.4-5.

Jones resisted assumptions of cultural superiority, such as in his desire to translate Indian law into English for use by British judges, believing that Indian law best served its own people. Although importing western institutional hierarchies, Jones presents an avocation of unity as a system of control rather than employing confrontational methods.

In his discussion of China in ‘The Seventh Anniversary Discourse’, Jones notes the unstable, shifting identity of China and intimates an awareness of the reductive, restrictive labelling of the empire as ‘China’, when the its people have a much more diverse conception of their Empire’s identity. Jones critiques the ways in which European cultural hegemonies flatten and simplify other cultures in order to fit with a narrow European value system of tastes, ideas and attitudes or, in this case, the English language and its narrow connection between sign and meaning in comparison to the nuance and complexity of the Chinese language.

The word *China*, concerning which I shall offer some new remarks, is well known to the people whom we call the *Chinese*; but they never apply it [...] to themselves or to their country. Themselves [...] they describe as the *people of Han*, or of some other illustrious family [...] and their country they call *Chum-cut*, or the *Central Kingdom*, representing it in their symbolical characters by a parallelogram exactly bisected. At other times they distinguish it by the words *Tienhia*, or What is under Heaven.<sup>23</sup>

Stafford identifies tension between ‘Enlightenment epistemologies of schematisation, codification, classification and quantification’ and ‘polyphonic, Epicurean, libertine, rococo and romantic epistemologies’.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Jones, ‘The Seventh Anniversary Discourse’, in *Works*, II, p. 366.

<sup>24</sup> B. M. Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen In Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), p. 131.

Consequently, Elliot highlights ‘the move from broadly static and taxonomic early-modern natural sciences to the more active, experiential, negotiated, interdisciplinary, and integrated nineteenth-century sciences’<sup>25</sup>, which Jones reflects in addressing the complexity of such a nebulous place as China. Unlike the Royal Society, Jones questions his or other Europeans' authority in naming things and realises the difficulties that such cultural and linguistic hegemonies could cause. Instead, he acknowledges the tendency of European engagements with otherness to codify other cultures in the simplest terms and appreciates the complex self-representations exigent in those different cultures.

In attempting to break free of the further reductive binary to which China is subjected, that of being perceived in either wholly laudatory or derogatory terms, Jones declares:

*European* authors [...] [speak] of them in the extreme of applause or of censure. By some they have been extolled as the oldest and the wisest, as the most learned and most ingenious of nations; whilst others have derided their pretensions to antiquity, condemned their government as abominable, and arraigned their manners as inhuman, without allowing them an element of science, or a single art for which they have not been indebted to some more ancient and more civilized race of men. The truth perhaps lies, where we usually find it, between the extremes [...] [It] is not my design to accuse or to defend the *Chinese*, to depress or to aggrandize them.<sup>26</sup>

Jones's relativistic approach to scholarly study foreshadows Said's challenge of the assumption that knowledge is ‘nonpolitical, that is, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief’.<sup>27</sup>

Jones attempted to resist the external pressures of social conformity expected in scholarly endeavour. *An Oration Intended to have been Spoken in the Theatre at*

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<sup>25</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, *Works*, II, pp. 366-367.

<sup>27</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 10.

*Oxford* (1773), in which he outlined the need to have freedom of thought and inquiry, was undelivered by Jones, who refused to capitulate to the demand that he provide a complimentary address in celebration of the new Oxford Chancellor, Lord North. Jones viewed that an unnecessary intrusion upon his intellectual freedom.<sup>28</sup> Said asserts that ‘no one has ever devised a method for detaching a scholar from the circumstances of his life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society’, and that ‘political societies’ of the imperial powers inevitably imparted to their ‘civil societies’ a ‘direct political infusion [...] where and whenever matters pertaining to their imperial interests abroad are concerned’.<sup>29</sup> Just over one hundred and fifty years earlier, Jones was acknowledging and struggling with this exact difficulty of separating, or failing to separate, politics and partisanship from scholarly learning.

Prior to his departure for India, Jones had suffered increasingly from a sense of disillusionment with his home nation. Whilst he had proudly established Britain’s constitutional supremacy above even the democracy of Ancient Greece in his study of Fortescue’s *De Laudibus Legum Angliae* (1616), recent elections, such as the one of 1768, exposed the corruption and deficiencies of the political reality.<sup>30</sup> The problems with America depressed him equally: he visited Benjamin Franklin in Paris three times, and in 1779 proffered his own plan for peace through the construction of a commercial treaty that would demand some major concessions from England but without recognising formally American Independence; Franklin declined him courteously, noting that the work would not have been accepted by George III.<sup>31</sup> The year before he left for India, Jones travelled once more to France, where he met a final time with Franklin, and thence to Holland where he talked to Dutch Orientalists, who shared his dislike of the war with America.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jones, *An Oration Intended to have been Spoken in the Theatre at Oxford*, in *Works* (1807), I, lxxi-xc.

<sup>29</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Cannon, *Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, *Objects of Enquiry*, p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

At this time, Jones began to publicise his belief that ‘the war will raise no obstacle to this intercourse with the scholars of Leydon (sic), Paris and Madrid; for men of letters [...] ought in all places and at all times to carry flags of truce’, highlighting his internationalist and pacifist views.<sup>33</sup> In that same year, Jones also published *The Principles of Government, in a Dialogue between a Gentleman and a Farmer* (1782), in which a peasant suggested that the king could be impeached for failing to protect civil and political liberties, for which his printer and relative by marriage, William Shipley, was charged with seditious libel.<sup>34</sup>

Jones’s ideological and political difficulties are described by his friend, Lord Teignmouth, who was Jones’s colleague in India and at the Asiatick Society, and became his first biographer. Teignmouth recalls:

A difference of opinion on great political questions [...] [H]e felt therefore the less regret in quitting those whose principles he wished to approve, but from whom, an adherence to his own frequently compelled him to dissent. He reflected with pleasure on the independency of his station [...] and in leaving his native country, for which he retained the warmest affection, he was not sorry to abandon all political cares and discussions.<sup>35</sup>

Jones refers to his sense of disillusionment many times in his letters to acquaintances. He writes to Franklin that ‘all virtue and publick spirit are dead in this country: we have the shadow merely of a free constitution’; to Viscount Althorp that ‘I have been [...] a month in perpetual hot water [...] I declare with perfect truth, that I would not submit to this life, in the country and the metropolis’.<sup>36</sup> Jones also feared that England could become ‘a people of words

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<sup>33</sup> Jones, *Works* (1807), X, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> This was not considered universally a sound case: the *Monthly Review* describes the case as ‘styled’ as libel and as ‘libel as the prosecutor terms it’, and argues against suing the man responsible for republishing, in addition to positing that the prosecution was against ‘the friends of liberty’. *Monthly Review*, 69 (1783): 348-9.

<sup>35</sup> Jones, *Works* (1807), II, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> William Jones to Benjamin Franklin, 17 September 1781, and Letter to Viscount Althorp, 6 April 1782, *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. by Garland Cannon, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), II, pp. 492, 524. Jones also mentions his dissatisfaction

and quills, like a nation of parrots and porcupines'; the humour belies his frustration.<sup>37</sup>

Jones branded the efforts of the Asiatick Society as characterised by investigation based on humanitarian and intellectual curiosity by distancing the Society from mercantile interest in China and ignoring the fuel of the consumption of 'Chinoiserie' in Europe. Jones sought emancipation from the ideological constraints of British politics and society by referring explicitly to the breaking of boundaries:

Although we are at this moment considerably nearer to the frontier of China than to the farthest limit of the British dominions in Hindustan, yet the first step that we should take in the philosophical journey [...] [that] will carry us to the utmost verge of the habitable globe known to the best geographers of Old Greece and Egypt; *beyond the boundary* of whose knowledge we shall discern from the heights of the northern mountains an empire nearly equal in surface to a square of fifteen degrees; an empire, of which *I do not mean to assign the precise limits*.<sup>38</sup>

Jones refers to 'these spacious limits' of the 'objects of our inquiries', and presents an understanding of scholarly attitude as consisting of:

The three great faculties of the mind, *memory, reason, and imagination*, which we constantly find employed in arranging and retaining, comparing and distinguishing, combining and diversifying, the ideas, which we receive through our senses, or acquire by reflection; hence the three main branches of learning are *history, science, and art*.<sup>39</sup>

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with the attempts to block the progression of his career in letters to Viscount Althorp on 4 and 20 August 1781.

<sup>37</sup> William Jones to John Wilkes, 20 May, 1782. Ibid. p. 540.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, 'Preliminary Discourse', p. 5; my italics.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

Jones abstracts, and so advances, methods of arranging a cabinet of curiosity to form a comparative approach for a broader system of studying new ideas.

Structurally, Jones modelled the Asiatick Society on the Royal Society, with weekly meetings devoted to hearing original papers previously submitted and a two-thirds vote to decide questions. 'Membership criteria would be a 'voluntary desire' to be a member, 'a love of knowledge, and a zeal for the promotion of it'. Anticipating no need for money for the Society, Jones hoped to involve only the active men of science'.<sup>40</sup> However, more unusually, Jones intended the Asiatic Society to welcome 'learned natives, whether lawyers, physicians, or private scholars, who would eagerly' submit their work.<sup>41</sup> Jones suggested circulating a short piece in Persian and Hindi to explain 'the design of our institution [...] [and perhaps] give a medal annually, with inscriptions in Persian on one side, and on the reverse in Sanscrit, as the prize of merit, to the writer of the best essay or dissertation'.<sup>42</sup>

This is not as paternalistic as it appears. The concept of prizes was well established in British club and society culture; it marks a desire to acquire contemporary local expertise as a process of enlightenment.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 29. 2 (March 1975): 205-230 (p. 208).

<sup>41</sup> Jones, 'The Second Anniversary Discourse', in *Works*, III, pp. 21-22.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. See also Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society', p. 222.

<sup>43</sup> Jones and Banks endured a public cooling in their relationship when Jones learned that Koenig had bequeathed to Banks his botanical manuscripts and drawings upon his death in 1785. Jones wrote to Russell on 28 September 1786: 'Think how much fame Koenig lost by delaying his publications [...] I wish poor Koenig had left his papers to you; Banks has too much of his own to employ him' (*Works*, II, pp. 706-707). Jones urged Banks when nothing seemed to have been done by the time of his sixth letter: 'By the way, my excellent friend, you will do us capital service, either by printing Koenig's Manuscripts or by sending us [the Asiatic Society] a Copy of them; and we will send you in return, not only the correct Sanscrit names, but the Plants themselves; or at least their Seeds'. When private communication failed, Jones resorted to publicly exhorting: 'As [Koenig] bequeathed his manuscripts to Sir Joseph Banks, we may be sure, that the publick spirit of that illustrious naturalist will not suffer the labours of his learned friend to be sunk in oblivion'. Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 29.2 (March 1975): 205-230, (pp. 215-216).

With regards to Chinese connections, Jones corresponded keenly with his Chinese friend, Whang Atong, whom he had met in London in the early 1770s. In a letter to Jones, dated 10 December 1784 from Canton, Atong writes: 'I remember the pleasure of dining with you in company with Capt. Blake and Sir Joshua Reynolds; and I shall always remember the kindness of my friends in *England*.' <sup>44</sup> In India, Jones continued corresponding with Whang Atong, asking him for assistance in translating the *Shi King*. Atong declined regretfully, writing:

The *Chinese* book, *Shi King*, contains three hundred Poems, with remarks thereon, and the work of *Con-fu-tsu*, and his grandson, the *Tat Ho [Ta HsUeh]*, I beg you will accept; but to translate the work into *English* will require a great deal of time; perhaps three or four years; and I am so much engaged in business, that I hope you will excuse my not undertaking it. <sup>45</sup>

Jones also encouraged Atong to visit India and to encourage other Chinese people to do so as there would be 'considerable advantage to the publick, as well as to letters, might be reaped from the knowledge and ingenuity of such emigrants'. <sup>46</sup> Jones's comment reinforces his view that India, already the main hub of exchange of goods arriving from Far eastern ports to continue on to the Middle East and Europe, could become an equivalent centre of knowledge exchange.

In attempting to create a society that would bring together citizens from different parts of the world, Jones resisted reproducing the exact model of the Royal Society. Despite communicating over matters botanical, and being acquaintances since boyhood at Harrow, Banks's known aversion to the proliferation of learned societies may also explain why Jones apparently did not solicit Banks's advice and support in founding the first Asian society. <sup>47</sup> He made a conscious effort to

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<sup>44</sup> *Asiatick Researches* (1790), II, p. 204, quoted in T. C. Fan, 'Sir William Jones's Chinese Studies', *The Review of English Studies*, 22.88 (October 1946): 304-314, (p. 308).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* See also Jones, *Works*, VI, pp. 452-53.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, *Works*, I, pp. 372-73.

<sup>47</sup> Garland Cannon, 'Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society', p. 207.



construct an alternative to the Royal Society. Jones offers a subtle criticism of the Royal Society, which he described as reaching its ‘splendid zenith’ when ‘a Halley was their secretary, and a Newton their president’. Considering Newton was president from 1703 until his death in 1727, Jones appears to be hinting its time had passed.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to Garland, who argues Jones ‘always conceived the two [societies] as complementary, never competitive’, Jones seems to be implying tacitly that the Royal Society was waning as the Asiatick Society waxed.<sup>49</sup>

The Asiatick Society began in Bengal, printing its work in Calcutta before its publications ever reached London. First published as a private publication in Calcutta by Manuel Cantopher under the title of *Asiatick Researches* in 1788, a subsequent four volumes of the Society’s work were published in 1790, 1793, 1795 and 1797; each member of the Society purchased a volume at a price of twenty rupees. The *Asiatick Researches* quickly came to be in great demand in the literary and scholarly circles. Some volumes of *Asiatick Researches* were translated into German as well as in French, and a pirated edition of the first volume came into circulation in England in 1788.

The illegitimate printing of *The Asiatic Miscellany: consisting of translations, imitations, fugitive pieces, original productions, and extracts from curious publications* (London, 1787) lists William Chambers first in the frontispiece. By the time of the reprint in 1792, Jones’s name is predominant, and the first volume consists entirely of his work. Jones disparaged *The Asiatic Miscellany*. Frustrated that it was mistaken for his society’s first publication, he declared, ‘*The Asiatic Miscellany* [...] is not the publication of our society, who mean to print no scraps, nor any mere translations [...] [*The Asiatic Miscellany*] has not been so correctly printed as I could wish’.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> William Jones, ‘A Discourse on the Institution of a Society’, *Works*, III, p. 3. The playful use of the indefinite article in ‘a Halley’ and ‘a Newton’ emphasises the transformation of the curious intellectual into curious object, something to which Jones would later be subjected.

<sup>49</sup> Garland Cannon, ‘Sir William Jones, Sir Joseph Banks, and the Royal Society’, p. 226.

<sup>50</sup> William Jones to Joseph Cooper Walker, 11 September, 1787, *Letters*, ed. by Garland Cannon, II, p. 770.

As Jones was concerned with apportioning credit to Asian literature, he disliked its presentation in a volume titled in a manner that appeals to European notions of its illegitimacy. The legitimate text was in India; the facsimile, the illegitimate version, was located in Britain.<sup>51</sup> The original choice of name is a further example of the determination to be distinct from other societies, particularly the Royal Society, which produced 'Transactions'. The change of name of the Asiatic Society's publication to *Asiatic Transactions* occurred after Jones's death, implying that it was Jones who sought particularly to emphasise his society's originality and novelty.

Jones adopted a discourse of authenticity in distinguishing between real and fake Oriental goods, desiring:

[To] prove the authenticity of those eastern originals, from which I profess to have translated them... [S]o many productions, invented in France, have been offered to the publick as genuine translations from the languages of Asia, that I should have wished [...] to clear my publication from the slightest suspicion of imposture: but there is a circumstance peculiarly hard in the present case; namely, that, were I to produce the originals themselves, it would be impossible to persuade some men, that even they were not forged for the purpose, like the pretended language of Formosa.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> R. Chakrabarty, 'The Asiatic Society: 1784-2008, An Overview', in *Time Past and Time Present: Two Hundred and Twenty-five Years of the Asiatic Society* (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2008), pp. 2-24. Through its publications, the Society also brokered relationships with several established scholarly associations abroad, including the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, the Linnean Society of London, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Society of Antiquities of England.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, *Poems*, pp. 1-2. For a discussion of French toleration of forgery of Chinoiserie, see Michael E. Yonan 'Veneers of Authority: Chinese Lacquers in Maria Theresa's Vienna', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37.4 (2004): 652-672. Yonan notes that although the Viennese and French revelled in their success at 'tromperie', there was a pervading anxiety of authenticity. In 1759, the court chancellor and diarist Johann Josef Khevenhüller-Metsch reports that the empress Maria Theresa ordered a Viennese lacquered secrétaire to be offered as a gift to the marquise de Pompadour. Rather than ship the marquise a finished object assembled by Viennese artisans, Maria Theresa ordered the Viennese materials transported to Paris, where local craftsmen assembled it to her specification. It then returned to Vienna for her personal inspection, after which she forwarded it to Versailles for presentation to Pompadour ('Veneers of Authority', pp.

It is hardly surprising that George Psalmanzar was familiar to Jones: the Frenchman faked his 'Formosan' persona so proficiently that he was called to speak at the Royal Society, whereupon Jones's father's friend, Edmond Halley, challenged him. A parallel discourse of authenticity exists between text and object, for there was a distinction between Oriental-inspired work of factories such as Meissen and deliberate forgeries attempting to masquerade as real Oriental goods. William Jones possessed a universal, cosmopolitan and ameliorating vision of literature: he did not regard cultures as inherently stratified, but as equivalent.

When writing about China, he referred to native opinion. Jones quotes the writer Li Yang Ping extensively in order to establish a better understanding of the nature of Chinese literary works. He describes some future material that 'the society will not, perhaps, be displeased to know, that a translation of a most venerable and excellent work may be expected from Canton through the kind assistance of an inestimable correspondent'.<sup>53</sup> Although as translator Jones held a certain authority, he did not isolate himself as an omniscient conduit of meaning; instead, he sought and valued native experts.

Ultimately, Jones perceived his existence in England as being in a 'ruinous state of suspense about India'.<sup>54</sup> He sought the newness and the 'distance of 16, 000

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661-2). It was a conspicuously non-Oriental work, valorising Viennese and French skill: a message of unity and skill between France the Hapsburg Empire, rather than delighting in her craftsmen's ability to fake oriental ware. The empress claims that her locally produced lacquered boxes could trick nearly anyone into believing that they were French. Trickery therefore serves in advancing the absolutist state's interests through a kind of cultural confusion, as another letter of Maria Theresa's demonstrates: 'All that I have sent you, the porcelain and the box, are from Vienna. The latter is not laque des Indes, but laque de Vienne. The artisans imitate it very well, with the same delicacy, that one could be fooled' (Maria Theresa to Prinz Ferdinand von Braunschweig, 22 December 1773). 'Veneers of Authority', pp. 663-664.

<sup>53</sup> *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, sciences and Literature, of Asia* (Calcutta: Manuel Cantopher, 1790), II, pp. 202-203.

<sup>54</sup> William Jones to Lloyd Kenyon, 30 September 1782, *Letters*, ed. by Garland Cannon, II, p. 572.

miles from all [his adversaries'] animosities... [as he was] more unsettled than ever'<sup>55</sup>, and expressed his hope that he 'may be less afflicted at a distance'.<sup>56</sup>

He repeats the sentiment to Lady Spencer: 'in the great orchestra of the nation, I have found [...] so many instruments out of tune and players out of time, that I stop my ears, like Hogarth's musician tormented, and wish myself at the distance of five thousand leagues from such fatal dissonance'.<sup>57</sup> Once his wish was granted, he comments from his Indian residence in Chittagong, 'The state of parties in England, still makes me rejoice, that I am not in London'.<sup>58</sup> India represents an ameliorating space: a place for Jones to begin afresh. His vision of boundlessness was expressed in his aims not only for a new Society with which to work but, arguably, his hope for a new society in which to live: Jones could emancipate himself from the strictures of British-orientated thought and state apparatuses.

### **An Oriental Mantle**

One outcome of Jones's skills in eastern languages and his determination to relocate and create a new centre of knowledge was that, combined with the perception of his unusualness and rarity, he became a curious object. William Belsham, named him 'the wonder of the present age'.<sup>59</sup> The use of the definite article enhances the sense of uniqueness, a primary quality of the curio, imbuing Jones with heightened value. Similarly, William Hayley described Jones in an elegy upon his death as 'the Character' and 'a subject', contrasting with his description of 'every man of letters' who ought to be 'induced' to write about

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<sup>55</sup> Jones to James Eyre, 2 October 1782, Cannon, II, p. 575.

<sup>56</sup> Jones to Edmund Burke, 8 October 1782, Cannon, II, p. 579.

<sup>57</sup> Jones to Lady Spencer, 23 October 1782, Cannon, II, p. 582.

<sup>58</sup> Jones to Sir John Macpherson, 6 May 1786, Cannon, II, pp. 697-98.

<sup>59</sup> William Belsham, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III to the Session of Parliament Ending A.D. 1793* (London: G.G. & J. Robinson, 1801), pp. 253-54.

Jones: it implies Jones is a curious thing to study, with men of letters categorised differently as the agents of curiosity.<sup>60</sup>

Jones acquired the soubriquet ‘Oriental Jones’ in the *Monthly Review*, which recorded a legal case against William Jones. Jones’s name is footnoted with the additional description that he is ‘generally styled ‘Oriental Jones’ from his uncommon skill in the eastern languages’.<sup>61</sup> ‘Styled’ constructs Jones as an object subject to the perception of others. Hannah More recounts that ‘Oriental Jones was with us: he is one of those great geniuses whom it is easier to read than to hear; for, whenever he speaks, it is with seeming reluctance, though master of many languages’.<sup>62</sup> More presents Jones as a curio to be read rather than someone with whom she can engage. His permanent residence in distant India resulted in Jones becoming othered, read via text and image, and constructed via a composite of multiple impressions and textual records.

William Jones’s friend Lord Teignmouth is the most persistent in constructing Jones posthumously as curious and orientalist, particularly in the promotion of the collection of Jones’ works, to which Teignmouth had added the memoir that he had written and published independently a few years previously. The syntax of curiosity and collection is dispersed throughout the first volume. ‘Curiosity’ appears throughout the volume thirteen times, whilst the word ‘curious’ recurs twenty-two times. As Barbara Benedict observes, ‘as subjects and objects, curious people and things overstep or dismantle [...] boundaries. Curious viewer and readers are invited to come along, thus entering the worlds of the curious themselves’.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> William Hayley, *An Elegy on the Death of the Honourable Sir William Jones, a judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature in Bengal, and President of the Asiatic Society* (London: T. Cadell, jun. and W. Davies, 1795), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Monthly Review*, 69 (1783): p. 349.

<sup>62</sup> The *Eclectic Review* quotes these words, elevating Jones by selecting him for mention from what Stowell summarises as ‘ninety year old’ events. Hannah More, quoted in *Eclectic Review*, ed. by William Hendry Stowell, 12 (1834), p. 46. See also *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, ed. by William Roberts (New York: Harper, 1834), I, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> Benedict, *Curiosity*, p. 254.

Jones's dismantling of boundaries, challenging in its heterodoxy, is contained conceptually by reducing all of Jones's achievements in a synecdochic label of 'Oriental Jones'.

In *An Elegy on the Death of the Honourable Sir William Jones, a judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature in Bengal, and President of the Asiatic Society* (London, 1795), however, Hayley denies this is a reductive label, arguing that there is 'no impropriety in applying to Sir William Jones an Oriental economium [...] [as] no individual, in any quarter of the globe, could more truly deserve [it]' (35) and is 'our great Orientalist' (34). The constructed nature of this label, and its inaccurate application, is highlighted by Jones's own view that the term 'Asiatick [is] preferable to *Oriental*'.<sup>64</sup> As Jones himself rejected the term 'Oriental', it demonstrates the extent to which he had become a thing to re-name and cast in an Oriental mantle. William Hayley recounts Jones's 'hoards of erudition' that caused him to become 'one of the most *conspicuous* and most useful characters in the *polished age*' (my italics).<sup>65</sup> The lexis of collection and ornamental decoration is employed to convey Jones, enhancing his object-status.

Jones's premature death ensured his life was construed as more precious in its brevity. As Belsham describes:

Yet was that life circumscribed by the comparatively short term of forty-seven years. To his great and unrivalled intellectual accomplishments he added the highest moral excellence; and no greater or juster eulogium could be pronounced upon him, than that his virtues were equal to his talents.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> William Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, The Antiquities, Arts, Sciences, and Literature, or Asia, by the President', *Works*, III, pp. 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> Hayley, *Elegy*, p. 26.

<sup>66</sup> Belsham, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, pp.253-54. Belsham notes Jones's particularly multiplicitous and prodigious talents: 'As a linguist he was equally familiar with the modern and the antient, the occidental and the oriental, languages.... He was at once a mathematician, a poet, and an historian. He excelled in musical, in chymical, and in botanical pursuits; and his attainments in every one of these different objects of

Belsham recounts that Jones was ‘celebrated [...] for the profundity and universality of his attainments[...] Europe and Asia acknowledged his worth, and mourned his loss’.<sup>67</sup> However, rather than representing the universal, Jones is a liminal figure whose identity is founded on ideological tension, no longer culturally English but neither Asiatic.

Jones’s tombstone gives the impression that he died in the philosophic manner of his life, ‘calmly, giving glory to his Creator, wishing peace on earth, and with good will to all creatures’.<sup>68</sup> As Robert Travers observes:

A pyramid rising high above the other tombs of South Park Street, [the tomb] offered a model of intellectual heroism [...] Jones was the foremost orientalist of his day[...] By selecting [...] Jones as [a] moral [hero] of the settlement, British elites sought to portray themselves as benevolent patriarchs, emphasizing the peaceful aspects of the civilizing mission over its more brutal technologies.<sup>69</sup>

While most graves in the cemetery belong to soldiers and are marked with crossed swords or guns, Jones’s grave is identified by crossed spades and a Greek style urn, referencing Egyptian memorialisation and Classical learning. Jones’s interest in China, along with many of his other achievements in law, botany and chemistry, was edited out. Jones may have envisioned a newly liberating sense of boundless exploration, but became an object of the most Anglo-centric developments in the notion of returning to the old centre: Empire.

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research were such, as might justify the supposition that he had made the study of it the great object of his life’ (p. 253).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> *The Bengal Obituary: or, A Record to Perpetuate the Memory of Departed Worth to Which Is Added Biographical Sketches and Memoirs of History of British India, since the Formation of the European Settlement to the Present Time*, ed. by P. Thankappan Nair (1848; reprint Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1991), p. 81.

<sup>69</sup> See Robert Travers, ‘Death and the Nabob: Imperialism and Commemoration in Eighteenth-Century India’, *Past & Present*, 196 (2007): 83–124.

As Dustin Griffin notes, ‘war and peace, commerce, empire’ and other such national issues are adopted by poets as they ‘implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) adopt a political or patriotic stance’; by elegising ‘Oriental Jones’, his contemporaries cast him into a figure of imperiousness that he himself never sought.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 292.



## Chapter Four

### Interplay and Interpretation: Lady Banks's 'Dairy Book'

The sober and wary Chinese differs in nothing so much or [...] so rationally from the capricious European as in retaining his Customs unaltered from Generation to Generation; his House his furniture, his clothes, his utensils of most kinds are the exact counterpart of those that were used by his earliest ancestors [...] [Yet] the restless influence of Fashion in England destroys all possibility of the prevalence of good sense or of good trust in our Houses or Furniture [...] [W]e have adopted as ornaments both to our furniture and dress [...] hideous phantoms.

Lady Dorothea Banks, 'Dairy Book' (1807), p. 75.

Unlike William Jones and her husband, Joseph Banks, the renowned botanist and president of the Royal Society, Lady Dorothea Banks was an arm-chair observer who never supplemented her observation with international travel; instead, her exploratory work was imported into the domestic space. Lady Banks was among a minority of aristocratic women who created a *porcelain* dairy, joining an elite tradition shared by Aletha Howards, Countess of Arundel; Queen Mary II; Lady Mordaunt, Duchess of Norfolk; Lady Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough; Margaret, second Duchess of Portland; and Lady Temple of Stowe House. Despite the records of Joseph Banks's lifetime of work and unlike the archives and publication of Jones's written and printed works, the 'Dairy Book' is one of the few surviving documents that chart an aspect of Lady Banks's intellectual life. The 'Dairy Book', which contains her theories of porcelain and her techniques and methods of assessment and purchase, is a record of Lady Banks's attitude towards and interpretation of her porcelain collection.

The 'Dairy Book' is a unique account of Lady Banks's porcelain collection which exceeds a straightforward catalogue or essay.

This handwritten text deconstructs and reorganises the collection into a novel form: a memorialisation and celebration of a marriage, as well as an aide-memoir, catalogue, and encyclopaedia or repository for some of the Banks family's and others' knowledge about China, which was collected through the international exchange of objects and letters between Englishmen in Britain and China.

Joseph Banks compiled the 'Dairy Book' in celebration of twenty-seven years of marriage. It is matchless in its interplay between sentiment and academic study and in the interpolation of additional materials by the collection's owner and her sister-in-law. The document includes private, unpublished intimacies: the affectionate and romantic sonnets written by Joseph to Dorothea, and the inclusion of her favourite cow in the frontispiece. Although commissioned by her husband, and includes his public and private research on porcelain, the text repeatedly refers and defers to Lady Banks's opinion and knowledge. By describing her opinions through the use of the third person and an anonymous narrator, it elevates the text to an academic tone whilst protecting Lady Banks from the charge of intrusion upon male intellectualism.

Two versions of the 'Dairy Book' exist: the Kent Archives hold a complete text, which lists items from her porcelain collection along with essays and commentaries upon the subject. The second copy was discovered by Francesca Hillier in 2012 in the British Museum Archives.<sup>1</sup> I was invited to examine the document in light of the research that I had completed in the Kent Archives. The Kent text includes illustrations of a porcelain collection long since dispersed and gives an ordered progression from one topic to the next, with only some errata and addenda; the version held by the British Museum offers a jumbled miscellanea of assorted dates: a fragmented palimpsest of deleted and re-inserted and newly inserted information. Across the two texts, four hands are at work: in the complete version held in Kent, the bulk of the main text is in Banks's long-

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<sup>1</sup> Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre, Kent Archives U951/Z34; the British Museum (hereafter BM) has yet to catalogue their version of the text. As the text held in the Kent Archives is the most complete text and more frequently paginated, in-text citations refer to quotations from this version; when quoting from the British Museum's version, it is noted in the footnote.

serving amanuensis, William Cartlich, with insertions, footnotes and addenda added by Joseph Banks; in the British Museum sequence, the main handwriting belongs to Sarah Sophia Banks, with a few additional notes by Lady Banks.<sup>2</sup>

I have determined that the British Museum's version includes notes for the complete version, a near-complete copy of the text of the complete version and Dorothea Banks's own additional notes, working in conjunction with her sister-in-law Sarah Sophia Banks, added after the 'Dairy Book' had been completed in 1807. The two versions of the 'Dairy Book' contain crossed-out and addended material as well as leaves of paper with further information slipped inside. Consequently, there is inconsistent or absent pagination; where possible, page numbers are given.

The complete version, in Kent, includes a preface and four chapters: 'On the Antiquity of what is called Old Porcelain in China', 'A Digression on the Vasa Myrrhina of the Ancients', 'on the Periods at which our old Porcelain has been imported to Europe', and the fourth, 'Some Opinions of the French Connoisseurs'. This is succeeded by a description of forty-three key pieces from the collection, two sets of appendices which add eight extra sets of information, and series of tabled images. The British Museum text includes drafts of parts of the 1807 version as well as material that was added in the period after 1807, stuffed in to the second and third sheaves of documents.

The circulation and readership of this text is hard to verify. Some parts of the text were more widely published: in 1807 Stephen Weston published *A Specimen of Poetry inscribed upon a Cup belonging to Lady Banks* (1807), which was dedicated to Lady Banks. The use of a formal scribe, William Cartlich, as well as the didactic quality of the instructions for identifying authentic porcelain, could imply that the 'Dairy Book' was intended to be circulated amongst the closer members of the Banks's intellectual circles. The carefully referenced source material, using standardised abbreviations, allows the reader to cross-reference or research further points taken from Harris's, Le Comte's, Du Halde's and Amiot's studies of China.

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<sup>2</sup> With thanks to Neil Chambers at the Sir Joseph Banks Archive Project at Nottingham Trent University for his assistance in graphological analysis.

The text assists the independent reader-researcher who is unfamiliar with the porcelain pieces being described; the accompanying pen and ink drawings depict what Lady Banks considers the collection's highlights.<sup>3</sup>

When Banks wrote pieces intended for a specific audience, such as the Royal family, copies were enclosed in the 'Dairy Book' but not published, again suggesting a limited, intimate readership. The interpolation of the deeply personal poems, written by Joseph Banks or Dorothea rather than copied by William Cartlich, suggests that the 'Dairy Book' was an intimate writing *and* reading experience. The most likely explanation is that the 'Dairy Book' is, primarily, what it declares itself to be: a celebration of marriage and a shared 'calmer [...] hobby'.<sup>4</sup> Banks regarded shared hobbies as a symbol of unity and mutualism. As he writes in a poem to his wife: 'Mutual Love shall never cease, / Mutual kindness still increasing, / Mutual blessings shall increase'.<sup>5</sup>

The 'Dairy Book' also stored the collective Banksian and other associates' knowledge. The 'Observations made in the year 1775 on the Duchess of Portland's Collection of Old China by Whang Atong, a Chinese' is an interpolated text brought into the 'Dairy Book'. Whang Atong analyses the characters on the porcelain, giving a system of dating the porcelain: a chronological logging of the Chinese characters representing successive Emperors from Shing Fan in 1459 to Kaane Luung, the contemporary Emperor. The transcription of the name 'Kaane Luung' demonstrates the disparity in pronunciation between the Chinese transcription and the English efforts of Qian Long and, more commonly, Kien Lung or Long, although the 'Dairy Book' does not alter its use of Kien Long. This does, rather disappointingly, suggest that Whang Atong's contribution was included as a performative text, only revealing the female collector to be a student of Chinese materiality and highlighting her aristocratic connections rather than

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix for an example image (p. 310).

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Banks 'Poem', in 'Dairy Book', BM (1809).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

being used as a record of Lady Banks's attendance and purchasing at one of the greatest sales of the eighteenth century, that of the Portland collections.<sup>6</sup>

The 'Dairy Book' could function as a swift point of reference for any of the Bankses, whether Joseph, Dorothea or Sarah Sophia, to answer their own questions and the questions of others. It seems most likely that the 'Dairy Book' was a personal encyclopaedia, written in a formal manner so that, in the event of a question being asked, it could be swiftly answered. In 1814, Joseph Banks wrote to the porcelain manufacturer, botanist and conchologist Lewis Dillwyn to inform him that he had read Dillwyn's account of his visit to Natgaren and the China manufacture. In the letter, Banks states that he wishes to engage in a discussion of its history and composition: what he knows has been learned 'in my wife's dairy where a collection of China and Japan not easily to be rivalled is continually under my observation'.<sup>7</sup> The letter reveals symbiosis between male and female roles in collecting: Lady Banks brings into the domestic space specimens for Joseph to analyse.

Sir John Barrow is probably referring to The 'Dairy Book' when he mentions that Joseph Banks left among his papers a 'curious, interesting, and well-written history and art of the manufacture of porcelain by the Chinese, illustrated by a very select and extensive collection of choice and variegated specimens that were in the possession of Lady Banks.'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Some years later, Whang Atong wrote to thank Banks for his letter and to inform him that an associate is bringing for Banks a set of books on the history of China, some Tea and Nankeen Flowers. London, National Archives, Joseph Banks Research Project, BM Add MS 8099.209.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Banks to Lewis Weston Dilwyn, October 9 1814, BM (Department of Botany) D. T. C. 19. 83-45. Averil M. Lysaght notes how Dorothea and Sophia Banks 'loyally supported' Joseph Banks in his endeavours, giving the example of their choosing to wear woollen dresses when he was popularising merino sheep. This is an example in which family unity trumped fashionability. *Joseph Banks in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1766: His Diary, Manuscripts, and Collections* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks: President of the Royal Society, with some Notices of his Friends and Contemporaries* (London: John Lane, 1911), p. 271. Smith comments that 'Doubtless this MS. is still in existence, hoarded by a Collector of another sort, and it would repay examination'.

The positive reception appears to suggest that the work was considered of use and perhaps suitable for publication; the tone of surprise implies that the text was not well-known amongst the Banks's contemporaries.

Dorothea published nothing and was a patroness to but a few, although these included Josiah Wedgwood and the translator Stephen Weston. Her archives consist of some letters and accounts, so the 'Dairy Book' represents a rare account of her collecting habits.<sup>9</sup> Dorothea retains a presence in court circulars and notices of prominent figures at social occasions such as the theatre, but there is little known material with which to produce a coherent and comprehensive picture of the woman, her life and tastes.<sup>10</sup>

Studies of female collecting culture have proliferated in recent years and this case study will elucidate how, in the instance of Lady Banks, female collecting culture intersected with male scientific arenas and how the reality of collecting culture amongst elite women could depart significantly from that which is presented in popular eighteenth-century literary culture.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The breaking up of the Banks archive, resulting in Dorothea Banks's archive being shared between New South Wales, the British Museum, and the Sutro Library of California State was due to the Knatchbull family, who inherited the Banks archives, falling out with the British Museum, resulting in a sale at Sotheby's in 1886.

<sup>10</sup> Dorothea Banks has been overshadowed by her more prominent collecting sister-in-law, Sarah Sophia Banks. The historian John Gascoigne disparages Sarah Banks's collection as miscellaneous ephemera that record 'social history' rather than 'natural history', with the implication that the former is of less import than the latter. However, Sarah Banks's obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* reveals that contemporaries considered her 'strongly animated with a zeal for science and the study of natural history, of which she had made a valuable collection' and that 'she was the object of esteem and regard to all who had the pleasure of being acquainted with her... [which] constituted a very large circle of friends'. John Gascoigne, 'Banks, Sarah Sophia (1744–1818)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); *Gentleman's Magazine*, 88.2 (1818): 472.

<sup>11</sup> See *Women and Material Culture*, ed. by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), particularly the section entitled 'The Female Vice? Women and luxury'. Arlene Leis is currently completing a PhD at the University of York entitled 'Sarah Sophia Banks: Femininity, Sociability, and the Practice of Collecting in Late Georgian England'. It is as yet unpublished. Catherine Eagleton is currently working on a book about Sarah Sophia Banks and has published an article entitled 'Collecting African Money in Georgian London: Sarah Sophia Banks and her Collection of Coins', *Museum History Journal*, 6.1 (January 2013): 23-38.

The Kent text is evidence of collaboration between a man and his wife, and how their joint knowledge was circulated, collected and presented. The text is also evidence of Lady Banks's collecting habits and of her gentle intellectualism in her desire to acquire porcelain that signified historical, technological or artistic importance.

Charlotte Gere and Marina Vaizey have suggested that 'collecting (as opposed to accumulating) must significantly alter the repute of the objects collected, not only by adding to knowledge and expanding appreciation, but perhaps even more by conferring status'.<sup>12</sup> The pattern of collecting Oriental goods is off-set by the particular nature of each person's collection and what her Chinese mantelpiece connotes to her and its viewers.<sup>13</sup> A picture of knowledgeable collecting habits builds, contrasting with the literary caricatures of ignorant, whimsical collectors.<sup>14</sup>

Porcelain's malleability of shape and colour during production; its portability and stability of shape once made, with its contradictory hardness and fragility; its potential for display and use; and its combination of technological and artistic processes have created a seemingly immutable sign that is nonetheless able to signify multiple meanings, according to the way in which it is finished, where it is from, where it ends up and the context, whether of display or use, or both, into which it is placed. Its meaning is bound up in its origin, its destination and in its owner: porcelain performs from atop the mantelpiece or within the porcelain dairy. The methods of porcelain production have a near deified reputation, resulting in porcelain possessing a reputation of almost alchemical mystery as Chinese 'White Gold'; its role in domestic and courtly circles, as well as in international exchange, complicate its signification.<sup>15</sup> Cavanaugh and Yonan

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<sup>12</sup> Gere and Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd., 1999), p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> For further discussion of quotidian scholarly study in France, see Charlotte Bigg 'Frogs on the mantelpiece: the practice of observation in daily life', in *Histories of Scientific Observation*, ed. by Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> *Women Patrons and Collectors*, ed. by Susan Bracken, Andrea M. Galdy and Adriana Turpim (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), p. xxi.

<sup>15</sup> For further analysis of porcelain's courtly and domestic function, see Sarah Richards, *Eighteenth Century Ceramics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

have argued that the specific type of porcelain piece codes its signification: the teacup and teapot ‘does not function here as a sign of good taste, but rather of a metamorphosis brought about by a magical process, one that takes the plain and useless and modifies them into the delightful and beautiful’.<sup>16</sup>

McPherson suggests that porcelain's qualities, particularly its emphasis of surfaces, enabled the conveyance of theatricality in the formation and enhancement of eighteenth-century celebrity.<sup>17</sup> Erin Campbell reads porcelain as embodying the ‘cultural poetics’ of display, particularly in connection with the exotic and gendered Other, whilst Alden Cavanaugh is more interested in the meanings associated with privacy, projection and performance of status and the creativity that is bound up in the varying methods of display of porcelain.<sup>18</sup>

Mimi Hellman's appropriation of the psychoanalytic concept of expressive condensation proves invaluable to this study: she notes that condensation expresses ‘a mechanism by which multiple veins of thought are expressed through a single sign [...] yield[ing] a potent abbreviation that incorporates a multiplicity of complex, potentially contradictory ideas’.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, porcelain's immutability can be contested, as Emperor Qian-Long himself highlighted the way in which, by adding to the decoration of a piece of porcelain, one is able to re-inscribe the piece with a new or altered meaning, either retaining but adding to or completely covering, in a palimpsestic manner, the decoration that was there before.

Qian-Long was enthused by the way in which surviving ancient porcelain signified the presence and what he perceived to be the talent and glory of his

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<sup>16</sup> Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan, ‘Porcelain as Metaphor’, in *Cultural Aesthetics of Porcelain*, ed. by Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Heather McPherson, ‘Marketing Celebrity: Porcelain and Theatrical Display’, *Cultural Aesthetics of Porcelain*, pp. 87-106.

<sup>18</sup> See Erin J Campbell, ‘Balancing Act: Andrea Brustolon’s ‘La Forza’ and the Display of Imported Porcelain in Eighteenth-century Venice’, pp. 107-118, and Alden Cavanaugh, ‘The Queen’s Necessaire’, in *Cultural Aesthetics of Porcelain*, pp. 119-140.

<sup>19</sup> Mimi Hellman, ‘The Nature of Artifice: French Porcelain Flowers and the Rhetoric of Garnish’, in *Cultural Aesthetics of Porcelain*, p. 49.



ancestors and of China's past. The Emperor added his own poetical communications with his ancestors to porcelain that was thousands of years old: he read the porcelain as both a signifier of the past, but also as alterable by his hand, resulting in porcelain pieces that offered an interplay between past and present.<sup>20</sup> For the Emperor, the porcelain pieces that he decorated with his poetry possessed a dialogic quality.

Lady Banks shared Qian-Long's belief in the way the porcelain communicated China's past achievements; for Lady Banks, a piece of porcelain helps to create a moment of interplay between past and present, in which historic China spoke to modern British manufactories. In this way, the material process of collecting c/China, the one sublimating for the other, reflects what Chi-Ming Yang observes in the performance of Murphy's *The Orphan of China* (1759): 'There are two Chinas evoked: an ancient China of the play and a modern China of economic consequence [...] [generating] a set of affective responses that produces the conditions for theorising as well as imagining the western moral self'.<sup>21</sup> The materiality of porcelain collecting turns the ideas of the Banks family towards the nature and construction of the western economic self and contrasts Chinese historicity with western desire for emulation of antiquity through progress and scientific advancement.

Cavanaugh and Yonan point to 'the historical and critical link between [...] porcelain and the gendered Other, namely women'.<sup>22</sup> The mysterious gendered Other and the exotic Other thus overlap in their unknowability. This association between women and porcelain dairies has been explored in Meredith Martin's study of eighteenth century porcelain dairies, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine De Medici to Marie Antoinette* (2011).

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<sup>20</sup> Yu Peichin, 'Consummate Images: Emperor Qianlong's Vision of the 'Ideal' Kiln', *Orientalism*, 42.8 (November/December 2011): 80-88.

<sup>21</sup> Chi-Ming-Yang, *Performing China*, p. 166.

<sup>22</sup> Cavanaugh and Yonan, p. 8.

Although Martin focuses upon French and Italian women's passion for porcelain dairies, the framework she establishes of surrogacy encapsulates the profundity of the interrelationship between woman and home.

The fashion for collecting porcelain in a dairy evolved from a narrative of ideal female behaviour within the family dairy itself for, as 'a site of exemplary hygiene, temperance, and feminine productivity, the dairy was an architectural surrogate for the queen herself, just as it was for other elite women of her time.'<sup>23</sup> As eighteenth-century proverbs allude to, the home was not a detached reflection of the senior woman of the household, but could serve as her alternate self. The performance of control and management of the dairy contains the sexual threat of porcelain madness and excessive consumption.

Dairy management was an appropriate and fulfilling female role as an elitist expression of female virtuosity. A hierarchy of cleanliness, neatness and elegance, three recognisably female virtues, are explicated in the 'Dairy Book's account of ancient China ware. In her preference for Ming china rather than the newly manufactured Chinese porcelain, Lady Banks resisted the fetishisation of the new, but also rejected Ancient China for its comparable inutility and lack of cleanliness:

There are persons who affix an excessive price on Vessels of ancient China ware, value them on account of their scarcity and antiquity and talk much about them [...] [yet] though our Predecessors certainly intended them for appropriate purposes, we are now wholly ignorant of the manner in which they actually did apply them, either for use or for ornament; for my part (says the Emperor) I do not think *them either in point of design, of elegance of execution, or neatness or of cleanliness at all suitable Utensils* for the Table

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<sup>23</sup> Meredith Martin 'Interiors and Interiority in the Ornamental Dairy Tradition' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 20.3 (Spring 2008): 357-384. See also Martin's *Dairy Queens: the Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine De Medici to Marie Antoinette* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). See also a discussion of Belinda as consumer and commodity and porcelain as a metaphor for chastity in Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, 'Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29.2 (Winter, 1995/1996): 153-167.

service of a man of condition, for Ornaments to be placed in the small tables in our Apartments, or between the Books on the shelves of our Libraries. An opinion so decisive given by a well informed and able Emperor of China [as Kang-hi, the second Emperor of the Qing dynasty] is sufficient to do away all idea of an advantageous comparison between the ancient wares of China and those of the Dynasty of Ming. (DB, pp. 16-17).

The expertise and ability of the Emperor becomes a reflection of the author's. Yet, although it accounts for choice in aesthetic display, the passage omits, or is unaware of, the valorisation of antiquity that was paramount in the philosophy of Qian-Long. In the 'Dairy Book', ancient porcelain is presented as dismissed by the Emperor, when in reality he revered it to the extent that he decorated eleventh and twelfth century pieces with his own poetry.

The 'Dairy Book' asks:

Can then the Collection and Exhibition of Old China be considered as a trifling disinteresting amusement, or shall the Ladies who employ themselves in searching it out and setting it off to the advantage of Female Taste, always allowed to be superior to that of the Other sex, be considered as Patriots labouring for the advantage of their country; the forms of Vessels may be communicated to the Manufacturers by engravings but the pure white, the beautiful colours and the semi-transparent brilliance of the glaze of China Ware can only be studied from the originals themselves, which Ladies best know how to arrange with taste and exhibit to advantage? (DB, p. 8).

This vision of female collecting as patriotic virtue, assisting the scientific discovery of men, was not a universally held attitude. By praising British 'artists in porcelain' and local industry, Rev. Luke Booker broadcasts anxieties about the

consumption of foreign goods that had been fomenting for decades.<sup>24</sup> His poem *Malvern: a Descriptive and Historical Poem* (1798) is dedicated to Viscountess Julia of Dudley and Ward, who is presented as a model for those ‘who encourage foreign Manufactories to the prejudice of those in their own country such persons deficient in true patriotism – [they] are exhorted to imitate the Example of that Lady to whom the Poem is dedicated’.<sup>25</sup> This controverts exactly the ambition of Lady Banks, who wishes to use her taste for foreign goods to inspire and fuel British manufactories.

*Malvern* and the ‘Dairy Book’ are dedicated by an admiring male towards a known and admirable female, in a laudatory and affectionate tone, to commemorate a relationship. However, the *Dairy Book* possesses an authentic and profound intimacy, suggested in the frontispiece of Lady Banks’s favourite cow ‘Fill Pail’, valued for her productiveness rather than beauty. There is frequent reference to Lady Banks’s opinion and, in the later copies, has been turned into a family production by Sarah Sophia and Dorothea. Lady Banks is presented as joining the leagues of women who all have the potential to contribute to the productivity of the nation: she is no mere cipher or figurehead patroness, but an agent of improvement, even if it is advocating the rehabilitation of female pursuits and their place in the chain of knowledge – providing or supplying more often than interpreting – rather than promoting intellectual equality.<sup>26</sup> It is also an example of Lady Banks’s rare but commercially and socially-minded role as patroness.<sup>27</sup> By comparison, Viscountess Dudley is merely a cipher of perfection

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<sup>24</sup> Luke Booker, *Malvern: a Descriptive and Historical Poem* (London: J. Rann, for Brooke and Co., 1798).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Lady Banks was the first patroness of a calico or cotton ball held at Alford, Lincoln in 1791, promoting ‘the spinning of worsted among the poor and in the houses of industry in this country’. Ladies were ‘admitted gratis, appearing in a stuff gown... of the colour appointed by the patroness, spun, woven and furnished in the country and producing a ticket signed by the weaver and countersigned by the dyer’. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 61 (1791), p. 3; also quoted in ‘City news notes and queries’, *Manchester Notes and Queries*, 8 (1883): 214.

<sup>27</sup> Amongst the typical subscriptions to the Lying In Hospital and the Benevolent Institution, on 20 August 1810 Lady Banks ‘paid... [her] subscription to the School of Industry at Heston’, an educational facility for girls to learn to be industrious workers. Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre, MSS Knatchbull Papers U951/A75, *Lady Banks’s Account Book* (1801-1816).

in the deific description of her ‘noble Elevation of Character, that real Superiority of Mind, uniting Dignity of Sentiment with Benevolence of Heart’.<sup>28</sup> The Viscountess is a prize ornament herself, ‘entitled to Pre-eminence and Distinction’ like the best piece of porcelain, in a collection of patrons and patronesses, and thus elevated above other women.<sup>29</sup>

The ‘Dairy Book’ embraces the anxiety of global exchange, linking it to the improvement of the competitiveness of the domestic market, which, combined with British wiliness, could enhance the nation:

Our potteries have [...] awakened the jealousy of our neighbours by materially excelling the rest of Europe in the Manufacture and underselling them at Market, the art is now become a National object and no inconsiderable source of British prosperity; could we combine the solidity, the toughness and brilliancy of the Chinese porcelain, with the forms of the Etruscan Vases and the painting of our Modern Artists, who can say to what extent the sale of the Article would be increased. (DB, p. 7).

The inference is that material excellence is a synecdoche for a more general superiority. Once more, the ‘Dairy Book’ identifies museum-going with boosting British industry:

The elegant forms of the Etruscan Vases have been given to our British Potteries by the diligence and the taste of Sir William Hamilton [...] the Collections he [...] made were [...] deemed worthy a place in the British Museum [...] nor was the judgement of those who advised this measure at all deceived, for since the public have had access to this collection, even the cheaper articles of our Pottery have begun to manifest an improvement of the utmost importance to the extension of their sales, so that in fact the increased balance of trades upon this article owing to the improvement from Etruscan forms alone, has already many times over repaid with ample

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<sup>28</sup> Booker, *Malvern*, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

interest the sum voted by parliament as the price of Sir William Hamilton's well-selected collections. (DB, p. 8).

The 'Dairy Book' declares that the porcelain collection is supposed to be a particular resource to British manufacturers. Yet, the 'Dairy Book' is at odds with its declaration of public access, at least to manufacturers: the only recorded visits are of other aristocrats and royalty; perhaps the declaration was a private performance of access, supporting an ideal philosophy rather than actually satisfying manufacturers' curiosity. There seems to be some resistance to the more renowned British porcelain manufacturers. When the 'Dairy Book' accounts for Lady Banks's methods of categorisation, it declares that the worst sort, the illegitimate or bastard china, is produced in the commercial manufactories in Canton and 'made [...] [of] an impure Porcelain Earth or perhaps, like Wedgwood's ware, English Flints, great quantities of which are sent to China as ballast, are converted into Vessels very little better than Staffordshire ware' (DB, p. 33).

The composite nature of the 'Dairy Book' results in tension: purporting to have one purpose, but revealing the opposite, as English manufacturers are compared with the worst of Chinese porcelain producers and are even accused of turning waste into artefacts.<sup>30</sup> The reference to ballast hints at the dissatisfactory imbalance of exchange with China: British porcelain is being labelled a by-product of a material that, although essential to the process of travel, is mainly required when an empty vessel is sailing, as when it is carrying goods, the transported material replaces the majority of the ballast. It becomes an oblique criticism of the failure of British manufacturers to create goods that could be taken to China to rebalance the trade deficit.

Porcelain's malleable status is assisted by its liminality, between science and technology and art.

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<sup>30</sup> This criticism is perhaps recalled when Wedgwood writes to Banks in 1787, commenting unfavourably on the china samples that the latter had sent him from the East Indies, (although, by 1789, Wedgwood was responding favourably to the new samples sent by Banks from New South Wales). *Scientific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks: 1765-1820*, ed. by Neil Chambers (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), III, pp. 304; 316.

Banks reflects on the hybrid nature of porcelain: writing to George MacCartney in January 1792, ahead of the latter's embassy to China, he admits that 'I confess I feel much interest in the Success of an undertaking from whence the usefull as well as the *ornamental sciences* are likely to derive infinite benefit' (my italics).<sup>31</sup> Porcelain becomes a mutual repository for gendered interests: Lady Banks could ascribe her interest in history and decorative technique, whilst Joseph Banks could satisfy his interest in the technological production methods and the science of the clays used.<sup>32</sup>

As Shteir concludes about female botanists, ladies' science consisted largely of contributing to the diffusion of knowledge rather than its creation.<sup>33</sup> As Elliott suggests, 'using [...] inventories [of] Georgian homes can [...] [underscore] the importance of objects in experimentally-validated science, design and decoration of buildings, layout of collections, and the meaning, use and display of equipment both ornamentally and functionally'.<sup>34</sup> Porcelain becomes the ideal material for a symbiotic display/study subject staged in the domestic sphere.

The 'Dairy Book' endeavours to demonstrate the significance and belonging of the porcelain passion in an interdisciplinary manner to science, history and commerce, creating a place for female activity, although confined and limited, within these masculinised realms. Mimi Hellman observes the various methods of empowerment provided by porcelain: 'the exercise of privilege [...] [T]he

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Banks to George Macartney, 22 January 1792, *Scientific Correspondence*, IV, p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> The substance of porcelain had long concerned members of the Royal Society: in 1688, John Clayton reported to the Royal Society about using Virginian clay in the process of porcelain production, demonstrating the early connection between imperialism, discovery and commercial potential. 'A Letter From Mr John Clayton, Rector of Crofton at Wakefield in Yorkshire, to the Royal Society, May 12, 1688, Giving an Account of Several Observables in Virginia and in His Voyage Thither, More Particularly Concerning the Air', *Philosophical Transactions* (London: S. Smith and B. Walford for the Royal Society, 1693), XVII, pp. 781-95.

<sup>33</sup> A. B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 62-66.

<sup>34</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 20. For further discussion of the role of women in domestic scientific culture in the home, see also Elliott, pp. 17-46. For a discussion of the conversation piece as a signifier of abstract virtue: Kate Retford, 'From the Interior to Interiority: The Conversation Piece in Georgian England', *Journal of Design History*, 20.4 (Winter, 2007): 291-307.

power to turn labour into art [...] it valorises the owner as one who has mobilised the productivity of others to generate a singular expression of refinement'.<sup>35</sup> As the Georgian house could represent 'a nexus of science, innovation, collecting and enlightened sociability', for the Banks family, porcelain was a substance that could fuel all three.<sup>36</sup>

Hellman's assessment that 'performances [of porcelain displays], if conducted publicly, could simultaneously amuse, impress, and register a range of socially meaningful distinctions that position individuals within a competitive hierarchy of knowledge, taste, and wealth [...] [and with] conversational potential' can be identified in the Banks's united efforts in collection.<sup>37</sup> The physical collection of porcelain, the intimacy of the domestic museum and the creation of the 'Dairy Book' ensures that the Chinese mantelpiece object becomes a conversation piece for Joseph Banks's *conversazioni*, meetings that were usually held in people's homes and consisted of private debate, accompanied by alcohol and music, with edited account of proceedings reported publicly. Thus, the porcelain display facilitates an interplay between female sociability and the male homosociality of *scientia*.

The 'Dairy Book' is a composite text of diverse sources of information ranging from the early seventeenth century to the time of the Bankses; it is simultaneously a creative, prescriptive, and descriptive text. The 'Dairy Book' is a centre or focus for the disparate sources of information gleaned from the web of enlightenment exchange which crossed continents. It returns public knowledge exchange networks into a private and intimate repository: a containment. The 'Dairy Book' also admits where the combined Banks knowledge founders. This is not straightforward competitive display of wealth, prestige and knowledge; it collects together tools for interpretation, such as Chinese cipher keys, but often highlights the difficulty of translating language and the challenges of interpreting the images. Its evolutionary creation means that the confidence of the earlier edition is tempered with the growing realisation, via the metonymic china, of the

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<sup>35</sup> Hellman, *Cultural Aesthetics*, p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Hellman, *Cultural Aesthetics*, p. 51.



vastness and complexity of China. The anxiety is expressed in the exchanges between Joseph Banks in London and John Reeves in Canton in December 1812: Reeves finds it difficult to answer Banks's queries about the figures on China ware as the designs are changed every year.<sup>38</sup> Such realisations resulted in a growing awareness of the paucity of what had previously seemed like a fulsome record of the porcelain: 'It will be evident from the foregoing pages that we know but little of the history of Chinese porcelain, of that of Japan we know still less'.<sup>39</sup>

### **Manufacturers and Monarchs: The 'Dairy Book', Sociability and Knowledge Exchange**

Joseph Banks's hand commemorates the way in which Lady Banks was 'practised in the social art' in an affectionate poem slipped into the 'Dairy Book'. The female role in the social art of connecting objects with observers is delineated further in the following account:

Mr Spalding's taste for collecting [porcelain at Blenheim] and the whim of ornamenting Dairies with it which the Ladies have lately adopted [...] [prevented] the whole stock of it [being] entirely broken and destroyed before it as again call'd into notice. The hoards of every old and opulent Family are [...] yet stored with this elegant article & If the fashion of fitting up Dairies continues, an immense mass of admirable Chinese Manufacture *will be brought back again into sight*, which would otherwise have lain dormant and absolutely useless in the Closets of the Country Houses of our Nobility and Gentry. (DB, pp. 5-6).

Although the reference to gendered realms of knowledge seems denigrating, in reality it introduces the idea of women undertaking an active role in the cultural and social progression of the nation, as collecting culture shifted from private

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<sup>38</sup> John Reeves to Joseph Banks, December 27 1812, B.M. Add MS 33982 56-67, DTC 19 4-6. Reeves also sent some illustrated Chinese books, which could be the ones held in the Kent Archives, U951/Z37/1-3. They are illustrated beautifully with examples of quotidian life in China.

<sup>39</sup> 'Dairy Book', BM (1809).

closet to domestic museum and public museum. Rather than female collecting habits being a straightforward 'by-product of homemaking in the form of furnishing and decorating', the porcelain dairy represents a partial separation from the home.<sup>40</sup> It is still part of the domestic realm and connotes virtues of female chastity and cleanliness, making it a virtuous venture, but it is a space for display rather than decoration. Additionally, Lady Banks stores porcelain for its cultural and scientific significance rather than its appearance alone, demonstrating the aestheticising skills of women facilitating the study of men by presenting new juxtapositions for improved comparative research.

Tapping into the growing interest in museum-going, but using the lexis of commerce of 'stock' and 'Chinese Manufacture', the idea that an object can be reanimated and given new purpose as a source of inspiration is hailed as possible through the partial democratisation of the viewing process. The 'Dairy Book' shows that the female domestic role can bring the closeted and private into a useful public purpose. It reinforces the Bankses' belief in the cultural importance of the domestic museum as a space that was more readily accessible than the limited aristocratic closet; perhaps it was because the dairy was traditionally separate from the house, as well as a place in which working women interacted with the mistress of the house.<sup>41</sup>

The Bankses added to the 'Dairy Book' significantly between 1807 and 1809. These dates correspond with two major series of correspondences in a quest for knowledge as Joseph Banks communicated Lady Banks's ideas and questions with significant figures in the world of science and exploration: George Staunton, the Sinologist and leader of the second Embassy to China; Thomas Manning, a botanist and resident in Canton; and the botanist and natural historian David Lance.<sup>42</sup> In 1807, Banks asked Manning for information on behalf of Lady Banks

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<sup>40</sup> Gere and Vaizey, *Great Women Collectors*, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> The Spring Grove relationship is recorded in a letter from an Essex landowner, John Conyers, who gives particulars of Mrs Parish, who is about enter the service of Lady Banks as dairymaid; the Kent Archive also holds accounts for the actual dairy at Spring Grove. 1805. BM Add MS 39167.150-151 and *Lady Banks's Account Book*, KA U951/A75 (1801).

<sup>42</sup> David Lance's significant contribution to botany through the importation of 'a large number' of Oriental plants is mentioned in *Annals of Botany*, ed. by Carl Dietrich

regarding Chinese pottery, kilins, and the sign of the imperial dragon. The letter forms the basis of the sixth appendix, which describes:

The Emblematical Animals used as decorations be the Chinese & the Japanese are few [...] but frequently repeated, those intended to be treated on which are enumerated below, are such only as occur in: Lady Banks's Dairy, others may be added when she is fortunate enough to obtain them. (DB, p. 78).

It exemplifies Lady Banks's purposeful collection, akin to a curator cultivating and shaping a collection. Similarly, Manning writes from Canton to Banks on 1 March, 1809, giving a detailed report on 'China Ware, colours, materials, and history, etc.'; 'some of the fine pieces in private hands had been originally for the Empress'; and imparts information that appears almost verbatim in the 'Dairy Book': 'Imperial Ware is counterfeited for the European market'.<sup>43</sup> Thus, porcelain can be tainted with illegitimacy at the hands of Europeans, with even an intimation of piracy and theft suggested by the admission that the piece was intended for the Empress.

At the same time, Banks wrote to Staunton:

Lady Banks returns her best thanks for his gift and is delighted with the modern chinaware; he believed the art was lost and had no idea such ware could be made; with the china-ware of the Duchess of Portland, by which they have learned to recognise from the marks the time and place of manufacture; asks for information about the Dynasties and ware characters of each; and as to the prices which the old China fetches, there is a tradition that the great Duchess of Marlborough paid £1500 for 3 jars and 2 beakers; asks also about the uses to which the various kinds of vessels were put.<sup>44</sup>

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Eberhard König and John Sims, 2 vols (London: R. Taylor, 1805), I, p. 399.

<sup>43</sup> London, National Archives, Joseph Banks Research Project, BM (NH) BC 97-98,.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Manning to Joseph Banks, 17 April 1807, London, The Royal Society, Miscellaneous autograph letters and papers, RS Misc MSS 6.28 DTC 17 35-38 (March

This, more than the accounts of the *conversazioni*, is the strongest evidence of Lady Banks's comprehensive interest in China. Contesting Goldsmith's vision of a 'lady of distinction', Lady Banks seeks the vessel's contextual history and an understanding of utility; the Bankses present Chinese porcelain as an ideal rather than deleterious female hobby: a rewarding intellectual exercise that is nonetheless located in a domestic utensil.<sup>45</sup>

The second tranche of communications occurs in 1809, as Banks 'returns thanks [to John Reeves] for the manuscript he has kindly composed and sent him' as 'no one in Europe could have given him the information it contains; it is extremely interesting and enlarges the sphere of Lady Banks's amusement [collecting China]'.<sup>46</sup> This reference to the expansion of the sphere of amusement reveals the nuanced interaction between science, observation and entertainment. The boundaries between masculine science and feminine domestic amusement seem to some degree porous and the two spheres symbiotic rather than conflictual. Banks refers to the interaction in a wry and affectionate letter, as he writes to David Lance, superintendent of the Honourable East India Company's Canton factory, on 30 August, 1803: 'At Lady Banks's desire I enclose to you the paper you will

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1807), Joseph Banks to George Staunton, March 1807. The 'Dairy Book' does not refer to the epistolary assistance given and only references Kampf, Du Halde and Amiot.

<sup>45</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World* (1760; London, J. and R. Childs, 1820), p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> London, The Royal Society (RS), Miscellaneous autograph letters and papers, RS Misc MSS 6.28 DTC 17 311 (July 12 1809), Joseph Banks to John Reeves, 12 July 1809. John Reeves was a botanist who lived in Canton, whose work has been gathered in The Reeves Collection of Chinese botanical drawings held at the RHS Lindley Library. The exchange continues as John Reeves writes from Canton on December 27th 1812: he finds it difficult to answer Banks's queries as to the figures on China ware as the designs are changed every year and is sending illustrated Chinese books. (Ibid. DTC 19 4-6). These books could be the ones held in the Kent Archives (U951/Z37/1-3). They are beautifully illustrated Chinese texts describing quotidian life in China: in detailed, intricate line drawings of about 20cm in diameter, scenes of cooking, washing, weaving, planting and other domestic activities are shown, similar to scenes typically cast on wallpaper. For further information, see Kate Bailey, 'The Reeves Collection of Chinese botanical drawings', *The Plantsman*, 9 (December, 2010): 218-225 and Fa-ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 43-58. Fan considers natural history illustration as a 'site of cultural encounter' (p. 52).

receive with this. She is a little old-china mad. But she wishes to mix as much reason with her madness as possible'.<sup>47</sup>

On her behalf, Banks asks a series of questions about Chinese porcelain's provenance, use and production asked in an effort to understand her collection more deeply. Lady Banks wished to set her porcelain pieces into a Chinese context to aid de-mystification of the pieces. Banks feminises his wife's passion with the familiar, if affectionate, charge against women of madness, countering it with an equivalent dose of reason: Lady Banks's interest stimulates interplay between feminine and masculine traits.<sup>48</sup>

Rather than Lady Banks soliciting information, Joseph Banks mediates Lady Banks's 'madness' for porcelain through the textual control of writing to his contacts directly: supposed restraint upon emotion and an ameliorating effect upon female passion given by supposed greater male reason.<sup>49</sup> Not straightforwardly oppressive, this system of mediated exchange can be regarded in a similar manner to which men and women joined in easy sociability around the hearth. Objects such as Chinese porcelain, associated with display on the mantelpiece, could become the focal point of enlightened interaction.

Banks's letter to Lance reveals respect for Lady Banks's curiosity and the knowledge that she has already acquired, as he writes:

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<sup>47</sup> Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks: President of the Royal Society, with some Notices of his Friends and Contemporaries* (London: John Lane, 1911), pp. 271-72.

<sup>48</sup> For discussions of the history of women and madness, see Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987) and *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); see also Michelle Iwen, 'Women Writers and the Pathologizing of Gender in 18th-Century English Mad-Discourse', *Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies*, 25 (2009): 1-30, <http://www.genderforum.org/index.php?id=218> [accessed 20 February 2013].

<sup>49</sup> Lady Banks's 'madness' was executed modestly: Lady Banks spent a relatively small, regular amount between the years between 1801 and 1803, totalling £37 27s; in December 1804, she spent £3 2s, which is less than what was 'lost at cards' (£4 15s 6d) in the same period; 1805 was a very low year (6s), but the following year cost of old china rose to £8 6s. In 1807, the annual account for Old China was much reduced at £1 1s. Between 1808-1809, there were no purchases listed. In 1810, Lady Banks resumes purchasing old china, but only spends 2s 6d. No purchases are recorded thereafter. Compared to the Duchess of Portland, Lady Banks had a very mild spending habit indeed. *Lady Banks's Account Book*, (1801-1816) KA U951/A75.

She has heard much of old china in England, but does not believe that any of it is older than Queen Elizabeth's reign, and that very little [...] is old. She thinks that all dishes and plates made after the models of silver plate, as indeed is the case with the greater number, must be very modern; that is, since the English traded with Canton in 1680, when I believe the first direct ship sailed from London. She has an idea also that tea-pots, and all the tea-service, are unknown to the economy of the Chinese. Coffee-pots she is sure are so. She believes [...] the Chinese use cups, not very unlike tea-cups, for their usual food [...] She wishes much the same information on the subject of burnt-in china.<sup>50</sup>

The letter reveals Lady Banks's involvement and the depth of the knowledge that she sought in the production of the 'Dairy Book' and the understanding of her collection. It suggests that though commissioned by Banks and written up by his amanuensis, Cartlich, they were recording ideas and knowledge of Lady and Joseph Banks. The opinions expressed in the letter correspond with the views recorded in the 'Dairy Book', suggesting the interpolation of Lance's information. It challenges the supposition that a woman's ultimate aim was bright, intensely coloured ornamentation.

The 'Dairy Book' observes that 'what we now call Old China [...] at last [...] found the level of its real value and became attainable by persons of middling fortunes, a sufficient reason why the rich should abandon the use of it' (p. 31). Yet the Porcelain Dairy at Spring Grove shared an elite perspective inspired by the Duchess of Portland's museum. This, as Stacey Sloboda has pointed out, emphasised commercial and imperially driven modes of acquisition and exchange, similar to the intentions of Lady Banks's porcelain dairy. Such sociability,

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<sup>50</sup> Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks*, p. 272.

understood as relations governed by cultural conventions, was intimately tied to eighteenth-century class- and gender-based codes of politeness.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time as being concerned with an elite status, the 'Dairy Book' declares:

The humble effort of Lady Banks, whose collection [of Chinese porcelain] *is at all times open* to those Manufacturers who wish to consult it for the purpose of improving their Wares, should be rescued from the obloquy of those unthinking Persons who are in the habit of considering Old China as useless trumpery, & admitted to that proportion of national importance & of public regard, which all Collections capable of promoting the success of an interesting & a rapidly improving Manufacture, most clearly deserves to obtain. (DB, p. 9).<sup>52</sup>

Yet, this declaration that the porcelain dairy is always accessible is controverted by the 1816 edition of *The Beauties of England and Wales: or, Delineations, topographical, historical, and descriptive, of each county*:

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<sup>51</sup> Stacey Sloboda, 'Displaying Materials: Porcelain and Natural History in the Duchess of Portland's Museum', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43.4 (2010): 455-472.

<<http://muse.jhu.edu/>> [Accessed 17 September 2011]. A significant difference between Lady Banks's and the Duchess of Portland's collections is that, in the latter's, porcelain and many other types of objects crafted by Portland and her female circle were included in her collection, marking the social exchange that was at the heart of her collection.

<sup>52</sup> The challenges faced by British manufacturers of porcelain inspired Josiah Wedgwood to condemn the tendency towards secrecy: 'Where no new Art is taught to the Public, where the Result of all the Experiments with Respect to the Practice of this art, the Proportion in which the Materials are to be mixed, and the Manner in which the Ware is to be painted and burnt, are all (contrary to the very first Principle and Condition of a Patent) Kept profound Secrets from the Public, would be a Precedent of the most dangerous Nature, contrary to good policy and general Inconvenience'. *Papers Relative to Mr Champion's application to Parliament, for the extension of the term of a Patent* (London: [n. pub.], 1775), p. 14.

<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=kings&tabID=T001&docId=CW107642294&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE> [Accessed 27 June 2012]. The Chinese origins of Lady Banks's collection ameliorates the competitive acquisition of knowledge between British manufacturers and refocuses their attentions outwards, promoting unity from a nationalistic perspective.

*Spring Grove*, a seat of Sir Joseph Banks [...] is a substantial, but unornamented, brick mansion [...] The interior, though not on an extensive scale, is commodious, and fairly suited to the temperate and elegant style of hospitality in which the distinguished proprietor is well known to live. *Sir Joseph Banks has not any museum* at this villa, and his peculiar good taste is chiefly perceptible in the air of dignified simplicity which prevails throughout. The name of its eminent possessor is sufficient to impart interest to this mansion;—a name revered wherever science has a votary and genuine worth is respected.<sup>53</sup>

This account suggests that, in reality, the porcelain dairy was only so for people who were invited or were of close enough acquaintance that they could ask permission directly to see it.

Nonetheless, there was a degree of porosity of class boundaries when science and manufacturing intertwined: Lewis Dillwyn was a Welsh gentleman-farmer and potter who socialised largely with the untitled middling sort, yet when he visited London to settle a legacy, he recounts:

Called on Sir Jos. Banks and spent an hour with my venerable friend [...] Went to the *Converzatione* [sic] at Sir Jos. Banks's where I met a large number of my old acquaintances & introduced Mr Griscom [...] Professor of Chemistry at the University of New York who had brought introductory Letters to me – I there also became acquainted with Monsr. Latreille, the eminent French Entomologist – a Persian Physician in a magnificent Costume also attended.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *The Beauties of England and Wales: or, Delineations, topographical, historical, and descriptive, of each county*, 14.4 (London: Verner & Hood, 1816), p. 444. This suggests that the Bankses did not adopt a rococo or Chinoiserie interior design.

<sup>54</sup> 24 May 1817. The Dillwyn Collection: The Journals of Lewis Weston Dillwyn, transcribed by Richard Morris. The unpublished journals of Lewis Weston Dillwyn from 1817 to 1852 have been transcribed by Richard Morris and are made available for academic use. Copyright remains with the family.



There is mention of the subjects discussed: Dillwyn emphasises instead the circulation of people in the introduction of new people and the familiar faces.<sup>55</sup>

The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* records in 1790:

On Saturday night last there was a numerous *converzationi* [sic] at Sir Joseph Banks's [...] when Mr Wedgwood produced the great vase [...] in imitation of that superb one about four years ago exhibited in the Museum of her Grace the Duchess Dowager of Portland [...] It is [...] allowed by all present, in point of look to be at least equal to the original, which was valued at two thousand five hundred pounds. The [...] vase is a composition of the most beautiful transparency, and does infinite credit to the artist [...] Beside Sir Joseph and a numerous company who attended on the above occasion, there were present Sir Joshua Reynolds [...] Horace Walpole and several members of the Royal Antiquarian Societies.<sup>56</sup>

The public label of the Duchess of Portland's collection as a 'Museum' helped popularise the domestic museum. From the 1760s until 1785, visitors delighted in the Duchess of Portland's collections, including Lybbe Powys, who commented: 'This place is well worth seeing, a most capital collection of pictures, numberless other curiosities, and works of taste in which the Duchess has displayed her well-known ingenuity [...] I was never more entertain'd than at Bulstrode.'<sup>57</sup> Horace Walpole, a porcelain collector himself, revealed his dislike for the Duchess of

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<sup>55</sup> Emphasis on the introduction of people is repeated on 5 December 1819: Dillwyn 'went in the Evening to Sir Jos Banks & introduced Dr Sims – Spent a most pleasant evening with Buckland, Basil Hall, Wollaston &c. Was introduced to Mt Perkins the American Engraver &c.' 11 December 1819. He spent a further '2 hours at Sir Joseph Banks's' on Friday 26 November and again on December 3, 'In my rounds of various errands [...] called on Sir Jo. Nicholls, Sir Jos Banks &c.' He did likewise on 6 April 1820. Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (5 May 1790), quoted in Aileen Dawson, *Masterpieces of Wedgwood in the British Museum* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 122.

<sup>57</sup> Lybbe Powys, *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys*, ed. by Emily J. Climenson (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), pp. 120–21. See Stacey Sloboda's article 'Displaying Materials: Porcelain and Natural History in the Duchess of Portland's Museum', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43.4 (2010): 455–472.

Portland's system of collecting in his description of her china closet at Bulstrode: 'contenting herself with one specimen of every pattern she could get, it was a collection of odd pieces.'<sup>58</sup> The Bankses bought the document containing Whang At Tong's research on the Duchess's collection during the thirty-eight day long sale of the Duchess's collection that began on 24 April 1786. By forging this direct connection to the Portland museum, it is arguable that the Banks family were replicating this notion of the domestic museum in the creation of the porcelain dairy. However, by focusing on one material, porcelain, the Bankses ascribed a greater sense of cohesion and particularity to the content.<sup>59</sup>

Joseph Banks had an established friendship with a number of manufacturers who were interested in research and development, but none was more intimate than Josiah Wedgwood. The evolution of their acquaintance can be traced through a series of letters that charts their increasing closeness; this friendship becomes a connector of people, as mutual introductions of benefit are made.<sup>60</sup> Wedgwood and Banks became friends after Wedgwood's business partner and friend, Thomas Bentley, moved to London in 1769. Bentley joined the academic club that met every Wednesday night at Young's Slaughter's Coggee House in St Martin's Lane to discuss art, politics, literature, theology and scientific research and among the members was Joseph Banks. Wedgwood would attend as Bentley's guest when he was in town and after his third visit, presented the club with a service of cream ware, on which thereafter the club always dined.<sup>61</sup> Banks, in return, would

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<sup>58</sup> Horace Walpole, quoted in *The Duchess of Portland's Museum*, ed. by W. S. Lewis (New York: Grolier Club, 1936), p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> See appendix for a transcription of Whang At Tong's observations (p. 312).

<sup>60</sup> For example, Wedgwood made introductions on behalf of Richard Arkwright (1732-92), who was campaigning to have a patent recognised: 'Having had the pleasure of bringing Sir Joseph Banks and you together the last summer at Matlock upon the subject of spinning wool machinery, Sr. Joseph told the other day that he had taken a good deal of pains to prepare matters on his part & would gladly proceed, but wished to know if you had taken any steps in preparing machinery &c. that he might have something certain to lay before his parliamentary friends'. 'Josiah Wedgwood to Arkwright Esq. Crumford near Wirksworth Derbyshire. Greek St. 21 Feb. 1786', *Correspondence of Josiah Wedgwood*, 3 vols (Manchester: E. J. Morten, 1906), III, p. 35.

<sup>61</sup> Barbara and Hensleigh Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle* (London: Studio Vista, 1980), p. 43.

attend the Birmingham Lunar Circle as an occasional guest of Wedgwood, along with other prominent figures such as Benjamin Franklin and Carolus Linnaeus.<sup>62</sup>

Their formal epistolary relationship began during April 1784, when Banks wrote to Wedgwood acknowledging his receipt of a Royal Society paper on the latter's thermometer.<sup>63</sup> There is a clear indication of a growing intimacy as, in the letter, Banks refers to the Wednesday club, saying: 'We attend the Club with tolerable regularity; Hodgson makes punch and talks of politics, Griffiths drinks it and makes jokes, but we all look for your assistance'.<sup>64</sup> The collegiate informality of the meetings well marks how the blurring of class could occur when science was conducted in such a relaxed arena, facilitated by a mutually engaging object.<sup>65</sup>

In 1790, Wedgwood formally submitted research to Joseph Banks at the Royal Society upon the subject of porcelain, 'On the Analysis of a Mineral Substance from New South Wales in a Letter from Josiah Wedgwood, Esq. F. R. S. And A. S. To Sir Joseph Banks, Bart', which was published in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* sixteen years before the production of the 'Dairy Book'.<sup>66</sup> Whilst the formal but broad arena of the *Philosophical Transactions* functions differently from the handwritten 'Dairy Book', which is narrower in both range and status of the contributors and is correspondingly much narrower in scope, content and readership, nonetheless there was a much deeper intimacy between Banks and Wedgwood than the criticism in the 'Dairy Book' might imply. Joseph Banks's social circles were more readily blurred in the scientific fora of his *conversazioni* and club meetings, as well as the arena provided by the Royal Society. Banks and Wedgwood's contact was sufficiently proximate that,

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<sup>62</sup> See Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who Made the Future* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).

<sup>63</sup> *Correspondence of Josiah Wedgwood*, III, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> *Scientific Correspondence*, II, p. 275. The scientific possibility is summarised in Banks' comment in a letter to Lord Macartney that the Chinese's 'Porcelane is a chef d'oeuvre of Chemistry, which Europeans have not yet been able to attain' (DB, p. 42).

<sup>65</sup> Joseph Banks to George Macartney, 22 January 1792, *Scientific Correspondence*, ed. by Neil Chambers, III, p. 140.

<sup>66</sup> Read 15 April 1790. *Philosophical Transactions* (London: S. Smith and B. Walford for the Royal Society, 1790), LXXX, p. 306.

when Lord Macartney considered a little industrial espionage during his Embassy to China, it was to Wedgwood that Banks wrote.

In the letter, Banks recounts that:

Ld. Macartney has suggested the propriety of taking under the appearance of a servant a Person well Skill'd in all the mysteries of Pottery who may [...] acquaint himself with any mode of manufacture us'd by the Chinese which the artists of this Country are ignorant of [...] As the whole is kept secret, I must also request that you will not tell of it. All who really know it, speak of it with doubt.<sup>67</sup>

The British elite and the manufacturing class possessed an envy of Chinese skills: these two strata of society worked together with the same aim with the joint recognition of Chinese reticence to share their advanced knowledge and of the British unwillingness to admit openly to their curiosity. Banks alludes to the slippery nature of the disguise, of adopting a mantle of any sort, and even those seemingly well acquainted with the plan were filled with uncertainty.<sup>68</sup>

In an analysis of tea production, Banks refers to 'printed as well as oral authority'.<sup>69</sup> An oblique reference to conversation, debate or dialogue on the topic, this oral authority remains anonymous, which is perhaps why there is such an emphasis on who was in attendance: it confers status and highlights male oral networks of knowledge. Male-led *conversazioni* were events of sociability and information exchange, which stimulated the circulation of ideas and knowledge whilst making it challenging for the researcher to track, whereas the recorded circulations amongst the Banks women were centred on objects rather than people. Object-exchange was an especially important component of sociability,

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<sup>67</sup> Joseph Banks to Josiah Wedgwood, 6 February 1792, *Scientific Correspondence*, III, p. 142.

<sup>68</sup> Perhaps this uncertainty amongst the organisers of the Embassy contributed to the public perception inadequacy and incompetence may be attributed. See the chapter on Pindar and the Embassy poems.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Banks to William d'Evaynes, 27 December 1788, *Letters of Joseph Banks*, ed. by Chambers (London: Imperial College Press, 2000), p. 115.

as they both facilitated and signified political, familial, and affectionate bonds. Sarah Sophia left her collection of books relating to Coins and Medals to Lady Banks and Lady Banks was a generous gift-giver from her own collection; when Joseph Banks wrote to Sir Charles Blagden on 8 February 1820, he includes mention that Lady Banks is sending two vases to Mlle. Vaucelle, Cuvier's daughter-in-law.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, Lady Banks made a gift of her Octoid piece to HRH Princess Elizabeth, of which there is 'a copy of a paper [Joseph Banks] carried to Windsor July 12 1808 for H. R. H. The Princess Elizabeth'.<sup>71</sup>

The Bankses were very proud of their connection to royalty, which is conveyed in the poem by Banks to his wife, 'To the Honourable Miss W. Thing, 1780', mentions 'and tho that eve we hope to see / Our friends the Royal Family / We mean in coloured cloaths to dress'.<sup>72</sup> Whilst there is nothing unusual about giving gifts to those of significant rank, the choice of vase is significant. A gift functions as a metonym for the giver; chosen for its Chinese origin rather than selecting a pieces that originated from the Marlborough or Portland collection, the beholder of the gift would foster first an association with Lady Banks and then with Joseph Banks's reputation for exploration and research into foreign and rarefied things.

The collection could also be distilled into a single 'homage' to its visitors, rather than merely reflect the tastes of the collector. Lady Banks could display her feminine attributes as a hostess as well as that of a skilled collector, for she is able to select. The principal attribute of a noted collector is an ability to discriminate, a theme to which the 'Dairy Book' returns repeatedly. Manufacturing and trade becomes a civilised form of international conflict in which the Chinese befuddle the English purchaser who lacks restraint and taste:

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<sup>70</sup> London, Royal Society B 89. Charles Lemon commented to Henry Talbot on 1 December 1824 that Cuvier 'used to have a little reunion every Saturday Evening at which were the most eminent scientific men in Paris, with a little mixture of female society that took off the business character of such meetings in general. – Cuvier himself is exceedingly pleasant, & you will find his step daughter M<sup>lle</sup> de Vaucelle very clever & amusing. She hates all the ologies but has plenty to say upon every other subject'. Thus an erudite young women able to converse with mixed groups of scientists would be an obvious choice of recipient of porcelain patronage from the senior Lady Banks. London, British Library, MS London - Fox Talbot Collection LA24-64.

<sup>71</sup> 'Dairy Book', BM (1809), not paginated.

<sup>72</sup> KA U951 Z35/1.

The caprices of fashion among the Chinese chained up as it is [...] [they express diversity only] in the formation of vessels of porcelain [...] inventing every possible variety in colour fashion and shape which Asiatic imagination can devise, they have, are producing and will continue to produce a multifarious variety sufficient to fatigue the patience and perplex the understanding of the purchaser, till he submits to furnish himself with more than he has occasion for, lest he should omit something that he really wants. (DB, p. 75).

A sheaf entitled 'the first edition' of Lady Banks's Dairy, tucked into the British Museum's version, includes a description of the Royal bowl, upon which it is commented:

When his present Majesty accompanied by the Queen and her lovely daughters honoured Lady Banks's Dairy with their Presence on the third of July 1804, she was permitted to offer a Homage of its produce to her August Visitors in this Bowl. That Lady Banks did well in placing two Kilins in attendance on his Majesty no one can doubt. [In the Kent version the following lines are added: These creatures, say the Chinese, are of Celestial origin and their sole inducement to descend to the Earth is to bear testimony to the appearance of super eminent virtue in the place where they are seen. That the virtues of our most Gracious Sovereign are super eminent and that his very superior talents are continually employed in promoting the happiness of his subjects (no one who is himself virtuous will feel any inclination to deny) That He is a Monarch whose eminent talents are continuously employed in promoting the happiness of His Subjects and that His unassuming Virtues cannot be excelled on this side of those regions of Happiness [...] Nor will any one who has been admitted to a near view of the Purity, the Virtues, and the talents of the Royal Group who on this occasion honoured Lady Banks's labours with the Sanction of Their Much valued Approbation, for a moment doubt, that if the Fable of the

Kilin was a reality, one at least of these attendants on eminent  
Virtue would have announced to the World the Birth of every  
Individual of these most Illustrious and most Gracious  
Personages.<sup>73</sup>

The Imperial bowl is renamed the Royal bowl, revealing the reciprocity between notable visitor and the collection. An aggrandising Oriental mythology, such as that of the Kilin, is attached to the British monarchy, an ameliorating adoption of Chineseness through perceived parity between the Imperial and Royal families. Although porcelain cabinets and dairies have been represented as a straightforward display of the collector's wealth, status and performance of appropriate genteel behaviour within a space designed purely for socialisation, Lady Banks's dairy could be elevated to a space for Royal entertainment. The porcelain pieces' elegance and unique properties reflected those of the Royal visitors rather than that of the collector. These items could also be re-inscribed as ideal domestic theatre of ideal femininity or a research facility for the scientist and manufacturer: the space alters according to the status and intent of its occupier.

No Ware is so well adapted to the purposes of domestic economy as Porcelain [...] it combines elegance of color with the most perfect cleanliness [...] Its surface is such that no kind of filth can adhere to it [...] [By] being a bad conductor of heat, it keeps warm our Victuals better than any other substance will do and gives us the curious facility of drinking hot Tea without burning our lips, which cannot be done from cups either of metal or glass. (DB, p. 33).

The 'Dairy Book' complicates the social space represented by the porcelain dairy, as the 'Dairy Book' transforms it into one for research, observation, analysis and reflection.

In the 'Dairy Book', 'the best Octoiad Lady Banks possesses' depicts immortality. Banks's comments on the piece note that 'on the cup and saucer offered to your royal highness by Lady Banks, the Eight-Tchins or protecting Genii of the

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<sup>73</sup> 'Dairy Book', BM (1809), not paginated.

Chinese are represented, accompanied by one human Personage; each of the Genii or Spirits is supported by a Cloud, the Man [Emperor] rests on a Mat or Carpet, in token of his being an inhabitant of the Earth', evoking the affinity between godliness, protection and, arguably, the defence of monarchy; it is presented as an eastern equivalent of the Divine Right of Kings. A scrap of paper dated 13 March 1807, inserted in the collection, adds:

It was deemed expedient that a Present should sent to Puan Khequa, the Chief of the Hong Merchants at Canton to secure his countenance and Protection. In return for this present several Chinese Curiosities have been received and [from] among them [...] Lady Banks has the honour of offering to the acceptance of [...] Princess Elizabeth. Their Chief value is that they are modern China which is proved by the Name of the present Emperor being inscribed on each piece and it is deemed probable from the circumstance that they were made by the Manufacturers employed by the Emperor of China.<sup>74</sup>

This is pure circumspection: the porcelain's known origin, bought from Cantonese merchants, has been supplemented with an aggrandising Imperial connection to create a porcelain narrative that reflects positively upon the gift giver and, more importantly, the receiver. Palace decree forbade the manufacture, sale or distribution of Chinese Imperial porcelain to anyone other than sanctioned court members; it was a capital offence.<sup>75</sup> Either the piece was a counterfeit or had been smuggled out of China at great personal risk; either way, there is a European taint of illegitimacy about the piece that is revealed, ironically, in the desire to aggrandise the porcelain with Imperial connections.

Although not exactly collapsing the boundaries of class and wealth, as the 'Dairy Book' is testimony to the pride the Bankses felt from the Royal visit, nonetheless, the 'Dairy Book' presents the purchase of porcelain as an occupation in which all

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<sup>74</sup> 'Dairy Book' [not paginated].

<sup>75</sup> Nigel Wood, *Science and Civilization in China: Mechanical Engineering*, ed. by Rose Kerr, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), V, p. 203.



classes are considered able to exhibit judgement and preference. The 'Dairy Book' records:

In truth was Sevres and Dresden Porcelain to be sent to market with such glaze and painting upon it [as Japon ware], as the middling classes of life could afford to pay for, it would be rejected by them; and even the poorer classes would prefer the blue and white pottery of Burslem, which is carried to every market in England, sold there at prices which every class of the People are able to afford and in fact is purchased by all classes. (DB, p. 42).

From a jingoistic perspective, it also hints at a national character that has innate taste and judgement, regardless of class.

### **The 'Dairy Book' and a Taxonomy of Porcelain**

Lady Banks guided her visitors to particular highlights, as Princess Charlotte's secretary wrote in thanks for the tour and specifically mentioned the Imperial Dishes. Objects could be selected for particular attention and set against the mélange of the rest of the collection. In contrast to the movability of the objects, the 'Dairy Book' presents the transition from one single piece to the next in a sequence that is fixed permanently by the preference of Lady Banks.

The 'Notices and conjectures on some of the more remarkable pieces in Lady Banks's Dairy', lists forty such pieces. They are not arranged chronologically, by size, type, origin nor value, although examples are given of the most expensive, the different forms (crackle, pierced or fillagree, black, white, and so on; numbers 5-9, 14, 21, 25-27), those purchased from another English collector or imported, and the biggest (the Great Cisterns, number 4), and the oldest (2, 17, 25); the piece given to the Royal family, renamed in their honour the Royal Bowl, is listed only eighth, reflecting the supposition that books are 'unstable repositories in a dynamic order of things'.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See appendix for extracts from the descriptions of the pieces (pp. 313-321). Luisa Calè, 'Gray's Ode and Walpole's China Tub: The Order of the Book and The Paper Lives of an Object', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45.1 (2011): 105-125 (p. 106).

Whilst the reader may progress in a linear manner from one page to the next and thus from one piece to the next, there are linked comparisons and disrupted juxtapositions. In the following description of number 38, the Nankin jar, the passage refers back asynchronously to vessel number two. In a rare example of recording the way in which the porcelain dairy was set out, the text records some of the physical order in the collection display:

The shape of this jar is antique and resembles almost exactly that of the Battle Jar no. 2 [...] the colour both of the white ground and of the blue painting up-on it Nankin, it is [...] the oldest of that kind [...]. this Jar is placed on the table close by the ancient blue and white jar 37 for the purpose of enabling those who wish to obtain a knowledge of China to compare the Chinese with the European blues as well as to distinguish between the Chinese ware of Kin-ti-Tchin and that Nankin the manufactory of which soon failed and has been for many years wholly abandoned. (DB, p. 47).

The passage reveals how juxtapositions could reveal more than the disorder of things: the placing of these objects miniaturises gulfs in time and space, repeating the exercise in containment that curiosity cabinets and the Royal Society undertook.

The only other items on which honour and specific placing in the text order has been conferred are the first ones to be described: 'the most curious and probably the oldest set of China Lady Banks possesses is that she calls the Journey to Pekin, it consists of eight detached Pieces and it represents a Family on a Journey.' The Battle Jar and the Journey to Pekin are given, in Lady Banks's taxonomy of porcelain, the label of 'old china', which 'consists of Ware made during the Dynasty of Ming, but before the Europeans had visited China and furnished the Chinese with cheaper but less beautiful colours than those they originally possessed' (p. 55). European entrance to China is here conceived as

deleterious, although that was perhaps because it was mostly rival nations such as the Dutch, French and Portuguese who were responsible for such intrusions. Antiquity rather than aesthetic quality is emphasised:

The Ware is coarse, but the Biscuit is compact and Good, the Painting is not all burned in [...] The red also on the top of the Palanquin is a deep crimson different from any hue of red seen on the more elegant wares of the Dynasty of Ming [...] From these circumstances it is clear that the Ware is not the produce of Kin-te-tcing, but of some Manufactory which has either ceased to work or with which the Europeans have not any longer a communication. (DB, p. 55).

The second item, 'The Battle Jar, as Lady Banks calls it, is also a very curious piece of porcelain, older than most of her collection'. The way in which it is described suggests that Lady Banks considered it the more unusual of the two pieces, although perhaps its poorer condition caused its secondary placing:

The jar is [...] one of the oldest pieces in Lady Banks's Dairy, its shape, the stile of the Manufacture and of the Painting upon it differed widely from the general appearance of the rest of the collection [...] [The] Painter has laid on thick coats of Enamel or rather of glass, Chiefly Blue in so imperfect a manner, that large pieces have peeled off and left the ground bare. (DB, pp. 53-54).

The text draws distant objects together: in 'Table 3', 'Figure 1' is listed as 'The Idol Vitex or Ninifo, taken from Ogilby's China, p582.' Juxtaposed beneath this image is 'Figure 2', belonging to Lady Banks, 'The Idol Ninifo reposing. From a figure of Porcelain in Lady Banks's Dairy'. This comparison is repeated with two new idols in Table 4. The descriptions attached to Tables 3 and 4 state:

This idol is [...] the Personification of sensual pleasures, his fatness and the delight expressed in his countenance exhibit him as in the full enjoyment of all the gratifications off voluptuousness. He is the principal figure in the Plate of a Formosan Temple in Ogilby's Atlas.

[A] comparison with the other Idols his figure must be of a vast size  
[...] Lady Banks has several Images of this Divinity in her Dairy.  
(DB, p. 58).

Dry curatorial analysis contains the indolence and sensuality of the Chinese idol. By placing the figure on a curatorial platform, the idol is not revered as an ornament but scrutinised as a thing of technical, socio-cultural and historical interest. Possessing more than one serves to demystify and normalise the 'images' rather than suggesting illicit fecundity.

Placing porcelain pieces alongside each other is also used for comparative purposes to support interpretations, here of antiquity and type:

This Jar, the Journey set and the Green Bottle and Triangular Cups have a general similarity in stile [sic] to each other and are all widely different from the elegant Porcelain of the Dynasty of Ming besides these pieces sound when struck, the sound they yield does not ring or continue like that of Porcelain – from all these circumstances [...] tho they are somewhat superior in their Biscuit to the ancient Pottery of China now in so high estimation, they are [...] still more inferior to the beautiful Porcelain of the Dynasty of Ming, and therefore probably been made [...] before the year 1300. (DB, p. 59).

This method of comparison between pieces evokes the setting against each other of porcelain pieces in the dairy. The 'Dairy Book' marvels at the heterogeneity of porcelain, with a hint of sensibility appearing in two similes of infiniteness:

All attempts at a complete arrangement of so multifarious and so immense a mass as heterogeneous and unconnected in its part as nature is regular and exact, would be as hopeless a task as to enumerate the stars visible in Herschel's telescope, or to count the grains of sand that are scattered on the shores of the sea; the Ladies of England [...] at a time when the beauties of China ware were more studied than at present because the price grows incomparably

dearer, attempted a kind of partial classification and succeed in distinguishing some sorts from rest; the connoisseur and the china dealers of the present time, have not quite forgot the names they used, a catalogue or as many of them as could be recovered is therefore annexed in the appendix. (DB, p. 38).<sup>77</sup>

There appears to be a sense of pointlessness to the exercise of a taxonomy of things and the ascription of Linnaean categories to man-made objects. The ‘Dairy Book’ exposes issues of stability and instability for, as Luisa Calè and Adriana Craciun remark, ‘Resistance to the logic of the system goes hand in hand with more undisciplined exploratory modes such as the essay, the aphorism, and the anecdote—forms which shun linear connections or exhibit the vagaries of consequential thinking’.<sup>78</sup> The ‘Dairy Book’ presents objects sequentially, with each piece of Chinese porcelain numbered, creating order and a potentially linear progression from one piece to the next; yet, at the same time, the text’s resistance to categorisation reflects a natural process of scholarship, unfettered by strict systemisation.

In spite of the professed impossibility of categorisation, the tenth appendix is a ‘List of some of the Names which the Connoisseurs have given to the different kinds of Old Porcelain’. Lady Banks has a list of four categories, a restrained number of which three classes that were shared with the Emperor Qian Long, plus a fourth and lowest category for the material that would never have entered the Imperial palaces: modern porcelain ware made for export to Europe.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The use of similes comparing porcelain categorisation with counting stars or grains of sand may be mischievous eighteenth-century modernisations of lines from Catullus’s Lesbia cycle of poems; Poem 7 includes the lines ‘*quam magnus numerus Libyssae harenae lasarpiciferis iacet Cyrenis [...] aut quam sidera multa, cum tacet nox, furtivos hominum vident amores*’ [as great a number as the Libyan sands that lie at the asafetida-producing Cyreni [...] or as many as the stars, which in the silent night watch the secret loves of man]. Catullus, *Poems* 7.3-8, my translation. Herschel, of course, was turning his eyes upwards to unlock the secrets of the stars. By utilising references to the sciences of astronomy, natural philosophy and geography, it anchors the sensibility attached to romantic visions of infinity in a discourse of scientia: knowledge acquisition.

<sup>78</sup> Luisa Calè and Adriana Craciun, ‘The Disorder of Things’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 45.1 (2011): 1-13, (p. 1).

<sup>79</sup> See appendix for the list given in the ‘Dairy Book’ (p. 322). See also Yu Peichin, ‘Consummate Images: Emperor Qianlong’s Vision of the ‘Ideal’ Kiln, *Orientalism*, 42.8 (November/December 2011): 80-88.

Lady Banks has attempted to introduce a general kind of classification into her Dairy and has [...] succeeded beyond her expectation but how far it may be usefull [sic] to others is a matter of doubt, no Collectress can possess more than very few sorts of the multitude that Kin-ti-Tschin has sent forth, every collection therefore will have pieces distinct and easily distinguishable from all others, to each Collectress then the task of arranging her own Cabinet must devolve and as female genius is in all cases more lively, more active and endowed with far more of resource in cases of difficulty than men ever attain. (DB, p. 39).

The ‘Dairy Book’ is thus contradictory: it condemns the aristocratic cabinet as fostering uselessness, yet here the cabinet is employed in a positive manner as it represents a curious hybrid between successful intellectual endeavour and a microcosmic version of the household, which the best of women manage with resource and creativity. Playing to a woman’s perceived strengths and within her absolute power, the display cabinet is rendered uniquely female and a complementary resource for male analysis.

## Conclusion

Despite its status during the eighteenth century, Chinese porcelain has much less cultural capital in modern critical literature: some major disciplinary assumptions and predispositions demonstrate, particularly amongst art historians, a continuing concern with assigning complex cultural meanings to certain classes of objects.<sup>80</sup> Interdisciplinarity can challenge these assumptions, bringing nuance and complexity to interpretations, particularly in intersections between collection, consumption and literature.<sup>81</sup> Porcelain functions as a signifier of multiple

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<sup>80</sup> Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan, *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth Century Porcelain*, p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> See Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, ‘‘Nature to Advantage Drest’’: Chinoiserie, Aesthetic Form, and the Poetry of Subjectivity in Pope and Swift’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*,

meaning: mirroring the way in which one may place objects of one's choosing into a porcelain dish, porcelain acts as a repository of diverse meanings.

The nature of objects is shaped, in part, by those people with whom a particular piece, or collection of pieces, is connected. It results in a complex series of interactions between collector and collection which are produced and reproduced in epistemological arrangements.

Ideological challenges arose with the introduction of porcelain to these previously functional spaces: the functioning dairy became re-fashioned as a porcelain dairy. The building was dressed in a kind of mantle, disrupting the active function whilst offering an additional location to the home's mantelpiece, the china closet and the cabinets of curiosity as places of display. Lady Banks complicates this elite vision of porcelain dairies, as the 'Dairy Book' asserts distinction from European tastes and collections, which are derided as fake and over-inflated in price. The dairy shifts from a site of active female performance of productivity, coded with symbolic qualities of ideal feminine behaviour, to one that engenders the performance of wealth, taste and specialist knowledge.

Hers is a porcelain dairy as domestic museum, between public and private; not merely a straightforward performance of wealth and display: it too is dressed in a mantle that complicates the space, its purpose and meaning. For the Bankses, the porcelain dairy is part of the 'house of experiment': the Georgian house as a 'nexus of science, innovation, collecting and enlightened sociability and the interface of these activities with changing internal and external spatial organisation'.<sup>82</sup>

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43.1 (Fall 2009): 75-94, and Barbara M. Benedict, 'Saying Things: Collecting Conflicts in Eighteenth-Century Object Literatures', *Literature Compass*, 3.4 (2006): 689-719.

<sup>82</sup> Elliott, *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science*, pp. 32, 22.

## Chapter Five

### ‘Gaudy’ Fantasies: the European Mantle of Chineseness

‘Gaudy’ and ‘imaginary Beauty’. (DB, p. 38).

Montagu lampoons the ‘gaudy gout of the Chinese’, yet the ‘Dairy Book’ declares that gaudiness is an entirely European conception and attribution that has nothing to do with China or the Chinese: Europeans have adopted ‘hideous phantoms’ (DB, 75) which are disconnected from the utility and cleanliness of authentic Chinese goods.<sup>1</sup> The ‘Dairy Book’ identifies the danger of ill-informed adoptions of Chinese-decorated mantelpieces divorced from context and signification, which results in Chinoiserie china:

The third class [Lady Banks] calls Young China and in this she includes every sort in which the colours brought to China by the Europeans are substituted for the Original Chinese colours, this does not appear to have taken place till the English came to Amoy which they left in 1737. It must have been before that time when the much admired blue and white China called Nankin, which is decidedly painted with European blues began to be brought to Europe and it was probably when the Chinese attempted to Establish a manufactory of China near Nankin for the convenience of the Trade of the Europeans who frequented the harbour of Amoy. The China ware called burnt-in, is of this sort, the biscuit is made at Kin-te-Tschin and sent to Canton whether white or blue and white, where it is painted with *all sorts of gaudy European colours*. (DB, p. 37; my italics).

To this, Lady Banks adds:

A fourth sort which she calls illegitimate or bastard China [...] [which is] formed and painted according to the fancy of the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Rolt-Wheeler, *Famous Blue-Stockings*, pp. 51-52.



Europeans, or what the Chinese think most likely to suit their taste, the glaze is thick and creamy without pretensions to that half transparent lustre for which good porcelain is so remarkable: the ground colour is often sea green and the Painting very gaudy [but] ill-executed. (DB, pp. 37-38).

The words cast such a picture of inadequacy, of illegibility and illegitimacy, that it juxtaposes more strongly the lines that follow, which state that ‘this is the kind most sought after by the Connoisseurs of the present day and purchased at the highest prices [...] it is made at a manufactory established at Canton not very long ago where an impure Porcelain Earth [...] [is] converted into Vessels’ (39). Lady Banks’s identification of illegitimate china corresponds with David Porter’s view:

Chinoiserie sustained its charm by mediating its immediate sensual gratifications through the simultaneous distancing effect of cultural estrangement. Its pleasures escaped the risk of vulgar satiety [...] not through the usual, prescribed process of intellectual transcendence but, rather, through the inescapable recognition of unintelligible difference.<sup>2</sup>

The association with illegitimacy of inauthentic and/or poorly crafted porcelain, allied with the criticism of the inflated cost of fashion at the expense of true knowledge and the reference to impurity, highlights the way in which scientific lexis could be the same as that used for discussing morality. The ‘fourth sort’ is not proper china nor, by extension, China: it both *is* and *represents* a not-china or not-China and therefore is both physically and figuratively illegitimate and inauthentic. Analysis of the mantelpiece decoration, subjected to scholarly scrutiny, challenges Thomas Percy’s conclusion that ‘The Chinese morals, notwithstanding their boasted purity, evidently fall short of the Christian, since they know not how to inspire that open and ingenuous simplicity, void of all guile, which more elevated principles of morality propose to our esteem and imitation’.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David Porter, ‘Monstrous Beauty’, p. 405.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Percy, *Hau Kiou Chooan, or the Pleasing History. A Translation from the Chinese Language*, 4 vols (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), II, p. 129n. Percy wrote

Chinese porcelain inverts the purity-guile paradigm: Chinese porcelain is pure and simple in contrast to the cunning European artificers.

On the subject of [...] chinaware much admired in Europe, called here green enamel, she [...] is desirous of information [...] Lady Banks knows that the old Nankin blue-and- white is in point of material much superior to all other china. She wishes to obtain [...] some account of the comparative degrees of imperfection in those that are ornamented with a variety of colours, as she is inclined to think that they are coarse in the biscuit in proportion as they are gaudy in the painting.<sup>4</sup>

‘Gaudy’ means showy and tastelessly rich and comes from the 1580s, probably from middle English *gaudi* ‘a trinket, plaything or bauble’, which is derived from the more positive meaning that originates from the Latin *gaudere*, to rejoice, used in Latin prayers and hymns such as ‘Gaude, Gaude, Emmanuel’. There is a parallel sense of gaudy as ‘full of trickery’ (1520s) from *gaud* ‘deception, trick, jest, joke, fraud, artifice’, likely from the Anglo-French *gaudir*, to be merry or scoff.<sup>5</sup> This fraudulence and fakery concerns Lady Banks. Lady Banks’s porcelain dairy reveals an attitude that completely contrasts with Montagu’s methods of oriental decoration. For Lady Banks, historicity and science can, at times, supercede aestheticism. Despite being ‘among the fashionable’, Lady Banks receives praise in the ‘Dairy Book’ for her unwillingness to alter or cease her hobby, even though the ‘Dairy Book’ notes that fashion has moved on from the fad of porcelain collecting. Equally, fashion dictates:

Porcelain de l’Inde [...] is made at Canton [...] [and is] little esteemed in China [...] and yet the French as well as some of the English collectors of the present day seem to esteem this above all other kinds [...] The Figures of Flowers impressed into them in *vivid*

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the first English analyses of Chinese literature, accompanied with examples; he also published *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese* (1762).

<sup>4</sup> Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks: President of the Royal Society, with some Notices of his Friends and Contemporaries* (London: John Lane, 1911).

<sup>5</sup> ‘gaudy, n.1, adj.1, adj.2’ *OED*.

*colours*, which bear evident testimony of an European original, the glaze is very indifferent and the Biscuit coarse in the extreme, however highly therefore the *imaginary beauty of their forms*, the *brilliancy of the colors* or any other of their fashionable qualifications may be esteemed, not one of which is intended in any degree to call in question, they certainly possess no part of the value derived from being made in good times as all Old China was, or from the excellent and inimitable materials of which good old China is always composed, they cannot therefore with propriety be admitted in a collection of old China. (DB, pp. 36-37; my italics).

The reference to ‘imaginary beauty’ offers a critique of the performativity of Chinese mantles divorced from authentic origins. Lady Banks rejects fantasies of the Orient yet, with the caveat that Europeanised mantles of Chineseness are superficial and insubstantial, at the same time seeks these anomalies, frauds and forgeries and those pieces that oppose her particular taste. In a letter in which Joseph Banks solicits George Staunton’s protection and assistance for the botanist Kerr in China, Banks adds that his wife ‘came into the room while I was writing, requests me to put you in mind of her Dairy. If any piece of *odd, unusual, old, or middle-aged china* should fall in your way, she will be thankful in the extreme for your remembrance’ (my italics).<sup>6</sup> Several consignments of valuable porcelain were sent to London, to the delight of Lady Banks and Sir Joseph, to whom it was a matter of a new discovery.

Staunton discusses the dissemination of information about Jenner’s vaccine and has translated it into Chinese, accompanied by a case of China cups for Lady Banks.<sup>7</sup> Banks ‘had no idea, until he saw these things, that porcelain was almost a lost art since European colouring and imitations came into vogue’.<sup>8</sup> Once more, Lady Banks’s collection facilitates discovery by proxy.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Banks to George Staunton, 12 April 1805, RS Misc. MSS 6.19, DTC 15. pp. 344-345.

<sup>7</sup> George Staunton to Joseph Banks, 20 February 1806, R. S. Misc. MSS 6.19, DTC 16, pp. 232-234.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks*, p. 273.

The following list of uniqueness or oddness which Lady Banks compiled presents the contradictory concept of a high volume of exceptionality, in which value is ascribed to pieces wholly innocent of European influence:

Pierced fillagree [...] [is] considered as a chef d'oeuvre of the Chinese Manufactories and which [...] has not been imitated in Europe [...] [in this] Lady Banks's Collection is very strong [...] Her hollow balls are very uncommon; Her Honeycomb and the pierced Vessels sometimes called lace China is fine as can be met with in any collection. She has also two Vessels of extremely coarse fabric and a triangular shape blue and pierced at the sides with very irregular net work, these were brought from Revesby Abbey where they with a Bottle also of the same colour and of very coarse workmanship, were the comparisons of the Journey to Peking, they may be therefore and possibly are of the same Age [...] It is certain however that they are of a very rare kind as none of the Collectors or dealers in China pretend to have seen any of the same sort elsewhere. (DB, p. 48).

The final line hints at double fakery: not only could pieces be counterfeit, there was an additional threat of counterfeited connoisseurship. Similarly, the threat of forgery has a double source: the wary connoisseur had to consider the possibility of European and Chinese manufacturers producing fakes.

As the 'Dairy Book' warns, 'the material used by the Mandarin of Kin-ti-Tching for the manufacture of his counterfeit ancient ware was, as the Pere d'Entrecolles tells us, a coarse clay & the Vessels themselves when made gave no sound whatever when struck' (DB, p. 15).

The 'Dairy Book' version is overlaid with gaudy European details of how 'none but Artists of eminence ever can possess and in which the half famished painters of Kin-Te-Tching are most miserably deficient' (DB, pp. 15-16).

This marks a misleading departure from Pere d'Entrecolles's letter, which actually describes a bustling market town; although there was poverty, the presence of three thousand kilns ensured:

[Despite] costs [being] much higher at *Jingdezhen* than at *Raozhou*, because everything that is consumed there has to come from somewhere else, even [...] notwithstanding the expense of living, *Jingdezhen* is the home of a mass of poor families who wouldn't be able to subsist in the surrounding cities. One also finds here many young workers and weaker people. It is the same way for the blind and for the cripples who spend their lives grinding pigments.<sup>9</sup>

Although a harsh way of life, the manufactories are providing more opportunities than surrounding areas; as the original work of d'Entrecolles states:

The mandarin of *Jingdezhen* [Kin-ti-Tching], who has honoured me with his friendship, makes for his protectors at the court some presents of old-style porcelain that he has the talent for making himself. I can say that he has found the technique of imitating old porcelain, or at least that of recent antiques. For this project he uses a number of workers. The material of these imitation *Kou-tom*, that is to say, of these counterfeit antiques, is a yellowish clay.<sup>10</sup>

D'Entrecolles presents the work of the mandarin as one of cleverness and notes that these pieces were circulated in the series of gift exchanges that lubricated the bureaucracy of the Chinese elite, suggesting that either the fakes were exceptional or, as it is implied here, appreciated for their skill. It is emulation, not forgery.

The 'Dairy Book' castigates European efforts that result in:

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<sup>9</sup> 'The First Letter from Père d'Entrecolles, Missionary of the Order of Jesuits, to Father Orry, Procurer of the Chinese and Indian missions, Raozhou, 1st of September, 1712'. The two letters by Père d'Entrecolles are translated from the French and published in William Burton, *Porcelain, It's Art and Manufacture* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1906), p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Almost all of these Vessels have a Seal painted under them, but so ill executed that the forgery cannot deceive even a careless observer. At the [...] moment it is the fashion to call it Mandarin China to prefer it above all other arts and of course to pay very high prices for it. (DB, p. 36).

In the description of 'Item 21', the Brown Egg Shell Jars, it is asserted:

Neither the Japanese [sic] nor the European counterfeiters of Chinese porcelain have been able to simulate this kind which is strong as well as light while all the Japon [sic] and European wares are heavy and an inconvenience [...] [They] forged the names of the Chinese Emperors which are the marks of China Ware upon their Japon, in order to cheat their customers by passing it off for China [...] In truth Japon resemble most the imitations of Oriental porcelain which make in Europe at a vast expense and excels them [...] but little: the biscuits of our mock porcelains are not very costly and would sell for little. (DB, p. 67).

The 'Dairy Book' mimics collection-management by recording elimination from the text: 'The same must always be suspected when we see Dragons with five claws on China Ware, Lady Banks has two cups of this sort, but she so entirely gives up their authenticity, that she has banished them out of her dairy' (p. 36).

Scored out but still legible, this erratum suggests that Lady Banks revoked her banishment, reflecting the microcosmic realm of female control that is represented by the collector's cabinet and the dairy. Her banishment of the cups reveals an instinctive resistance to the inauthentic but, as the 'Dairy Book's' philosophy states, retention still serves as a model of comparison in the measure of authenticity.

Similarly, Lady Banks has ensured that her collection contains examples of 'the Dutch who then traded to Japon, [and] had their Japon Porcelain to bring into the

European Market in competition with Portuguese China, it was then no doubt that they resort to the trick of placing the Name of a Chinese Emperor under a piece of Japon ware, *of which forgery Lady Banks has specimens in her Dairy*' (p. 67; my italics).

Lady Banks has cream or white ware which is:

As with us generally formed into Figures whether Grotesque or an invitation to nature and in small cups and basons. [The French] consider the cream colored as a variation; we believe it to be a defect. Lady Banks has the figures of Kiouan undoubtedly formed in the same mould, the one is of a pure and unsullied white, the other is Cream Colored. (DB, p. 35).

Juxtaposition reveals a spectrum of colours that a keen and knowledgeable eye can employ for the detection of real from fake. It reinforces a nationalistic vision of British wiliness in the face of continental forgery, incompetence and lack of taste. Porcelain functions as a synecdoche for a British imperial challenge in which female acquisition has enacted control and subjugation of foreign goods. They are not admired or treasured like the authentic Chinese pieces but housed, jail-like, as examples to British observers of the fallacy and dangers of Imperial rivals.

Lady Banks does not abandon taste entirely in the pursuit of examples: it acts as a brake upon the depth to which she collects a particular sort of porcelain, such as 'Crackle China':

Lady Banks has always considered this kind of china, however it may be esteemed by the curious, as the least beautiful of all the sorts she has seen, she has limited herself merely to small specimens of it, of which the best are two small cups ornamented on their sides with flowers in enamelled colours; these in some degree abate the ugliness of the ware, the beauty of which can only be derived from the Mass of imperfection which the cracked on the surface exhibit; this broken

surface is not however as some of the French collectors suppose it to be a proof of antiquity and of the unskillfulness of the Makers, for the receipt by which these cracks are produced is found in the Lett.Edif. Vol XVIII page 260. (DB, p. 64).

The castigation of crackle china is an effort to distance the taste of Lady Banks from that of French collectors. Chapter Three is entitled 'Some opinions on the French Connoisseurs on the Subject of Old China', in which the discrepancies between French and British analysis are highlighted, such as the French belief that the cracked glaze denotes venerability, which is dismissed in the strongest of terms:

What we call Crackle China [...] The French believe this to be the most ancient Pottery of the Chinese & suppose the Cracks to be flaws which the inexperience of the early workmen was unable to prevent, in fact [...] neither the ancient Porcelain of Mauroio, the fragments of Count Caylus, the Beads of the Egyptian Mummies or the counterfeit ancient Porcelain, manufactured by the Mandarin of King-Te-Chin are said to be of this sort, on the contrary the Pere d'Entrecolles gives the method used in his time for making this very kind of Ware which is called in Chinese tseui-ki. The opinion of its being antique must therefore be considered as a *mere matter of conjecture, unsupported by any evidence and wholly contradicted by every information at present to be met with on any kind of authority.* (DB, p. 65; my italics).

The act of collecting and of creating a collection is interplay between the complete, the whole or the ideal and the less than perfect.

As the 'Dairy Book' states, 'by comparison of these decisive pieces with uncertain ones, a good judgement may easily be formed'. Even fragments are considered to offer insight to the wider collection:



Her pierced cup of fillagree China would if it were whole be beyond all price as well as on account of the open work and of the Chinese Letter cut on each compartment, in its present state however it offers an admirable specimen of Chinese Art, as every ornament broken off is repeated in the parts that remain whole. (DB, p. 72).

With regards to illegitimate porcelain, 'of this Lady Banks possesses very little not more than is necessary of explaining its defects, most if it is hid in a large China Cistern where it cannot be seen till it is lifted out'. (DB, p. 71). The defective porcelain is a shadow collection, whose only existence is to highlight the disparity between the authentic and the inauthentic. It is hidden from the uninitiated eye.

The ability of the observer to discriminate is referred to on a number of occasions. Comments on the Lacquered China reveal the ability to use porcelain to read and interpret the method of creation of other items of Chinese manufacture and a judgement upon the nature of the potential audience that was received in the porcelain dairy.

The valuable Jars now at Althorpe are of this kind, Lady Banks has a small piece covered entirely with lacquer, in which shining portions of shell cut in figures are mixed which shews exactly the mode in which the Pannels of the Althorpe Jars are ornamented[...] These they have covered with Lacquer after the China had been bak'd & have ornamented them richly with Gold, the control of which are not to be paralleled & [...] never fails to attract the attention of the most superficial observer who compliments Lady Banks's Dairy by taking a view of it. (DB, not paginated).

Knowledge could range from the inadequate, the visitor attracted by glittering, shining beauty, to those who have taste and judgement to decide for themselves how to compare and rate the porcelain items before them.

In the case of the vessels numbered '22' in the list, the Japon [sic] Basons and Covers, of which 'Lady Banks has two pairs [...] whether this is equal in elegance to the best China Ware is left to the taste and judgement of those who may study the comparative merits of these wares with diligence and success' (DB, not paginated). This latter point is a false premise, for elsewhere in the 'Dairy Book', Japanese-ware is determined to be the inadequate alternative to China ware. Perhaps the 'Dairy Book' is presenting a test of the taste and judgement of visitors, in order to distinguish between the ignorantly amazed and the studiously critical. Rather than using the mantle ornament to display wealth and taste, the domestic museum exhibit allows the curator-collector to observe the observers and make value judgements based on their reaction.

Lady Banks sought authenticity through research. She valued, or at least tolerated for the purposes of analysis and comparison, ugly but historically and scientifically interesting pieces. The 'Dairy Book' records the Ancient Ware, of which Lady Banks possesses some examples:

Arguments equally strong in factor of the opinion that the very ancient ware now so much prized by the Chinese is Pottery & not Porcelain & that the Porcelain now admired by us was not made in China before the commencement of the Dynasty of Ming, may be deduced from the following circumstances [...] The Chinese themselves do not attach any portion of the ideal value derived from antiquity to ware of any kind, unless made previous to the dynasty of Yuen. The criterion by which the costly ancient ware is distinguished from the modern modes is stated to be that instead of ringing when struck it does not give the smallest continuation of sound. That the ancient ware of China bears no comparison in point of elegance to that we are used to see, appears evident from the opinion of Kang-Hi the second Tartar Emperor of the present dynasty. (DB, pp. 15-16).

Lady Banks has items that help contextualise porcelain by showing what it is not. There is even commendation for the Chinese preference for quality with a condemnation of European practice:

She [...] considers the ground or uncoloured part of the article: of the white of this is pure as unsullied snow without any blemish hue like old milk, she looks upon herself as safe: no China in which the Biscuit is fine and the white pure can be bad, or it is presumed modern. In coloured China, the purity of the white ground is as essential when it can be met with, as in the uncoloured, in proof of its excellence it should be free from that glassy polish which all European wares exhibit. The next criterion is the degree of skill and of labour that has been applied in the Drawing and Colouring of the Figures: *the Chinese never lavish good painting on bad Biscuit, as is done in Europe: nor ever disfigure good biscuit by suffering unskilled persons to paint upon it.* (DB, p. 49; my italics).

The ‘Dairy Book’ summarises the interplay between beauty, exceptionality and fragility of porcelain and the imprudence and admiration it inspires. However, this statement controverts exactly the observation that some pieces of Lady Banks’s porcelain:

Give room for a conjecture that [...] the Emperor had [...] painters in his service [...] of the best talents [...] [he] could afford, and it is very natural that he should, as some European Monarchs have done, attempt to hide the deficiency of the more essential parts of the Manufacture, but covering it with painting more costly and valuable than ought to be hazarded on materials so liable to be broken and destroyed. (DB, p. 48).

Lady Banks’s collection defies David Porter’s view that ‘China-mania became a promiscuous melding of incongruities [...] [and an] irreverent disregard for

authenticity'.<sup>11</sup> Porter's description presents a likely source of fascination of the Chinese to Elizabeth Montagu; it does not reflect Lady Banks's own pursuit of knowledge, authenticity and the interplay between disparateness and order within her collection.

### Interplay Between Text and Object

Porcelain is a liminal object: between high and low culture, between art and object, it represents complex ideas, technology and aesthetics whilst also being functional and prosaic. It exists between nature and artifice, too, as it comes from clay and is a man-made version of a shell-like substance whose production, for much of the eighteenth century, was as mysterious to most as Creation; it was of the earth and unknown and, until developments by Bottger at the Meissen factory, seemingly unknowable to Europeans.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Meissen Factory came the closest to producing Chinese-quality hard-paste porcelain, it never replicated exactly the mysterious formula from the East.

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<sup>11</sup> David Porter, 'Monstrous Beauty', p. 408.

<sup>12</sup> 'porcelain, n. and adj.' *OED Online* [Accessed 2 February 2014].  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/147941?redirectedFrom=porcelain&#x3E;>  
 Etymology: <Middle French, French *porcelaine*, *pourcelaine*, *porceline* a kind of univalve mollusc with a nacreous shell, the shell itself, (now spec.) a cowrie (1298 in Marco Polo), chinaware (also 1298 in Marco Polo), a vessel made of china (c1600), beads or shells used as currency, wampum (1620 or earlier as *pourceline* in the source translated in quot. 1882 at sense A. 4), apparently Italian *porcellana*, denoting both the mollusc and the ceramic material (although this is apparently first attested later (14th cent. in both senses in the Italian version of Marco Polo)), probably *porcella* female piglet, a young sow (a1400; see below) + *-ana*, feminine of *-ano* -an suffix, perhaps after ancient Greek *χοιρίνη* small sea-mussel *χοῖρος* pig, also female genitals (see cherogril n.) + *-ίνη* (see -ine suffix3). Italian *porcella* is *porca* sow (a1342), feminine of *porco* pork n.1 + *-ella* -ella suffix; compare *porca*, *porcella* cockle or mussel shell in which painters put their colours (1611 in apparently isolated use), *porcelletta* shellfish (a1488), and also *porcello* (male) piglet, pig (1272).

The etymology of porcelain reveals a western association with mysteriousness and non-human qualities of sea creatures; at the same time, molluscs and shell fish are associated with the fleshiness of intimate body parts. Contrastingly, the Emperor Qian-Long admired the square ru ware porcelain as embodying ideal masculinity and the qualities of a good man: straight, sturdy and strong.

Additionally, in conjunction with the 'Dairy Book', porcelain collections can reside between text and object. Porcelain can be a portal between East and West: porcelain's portability carries with it cultural associations in which Lady Banks, in particular, was fascinated. For Lady Banks, porcelain represented a fixed and tangible sign of China, china as metonym for China, but had become divorced from the context of China. The 'Dairy Book' re-contextualises the porcelain, mixing authentic Chinese knowledge, gleaned from those living in Canton and from the works of earlier missionaries, with the creative interpretation of the Bankses.

The 'Dairy Book' alters the experience of the engagement with each piece: typically, a porcelain display is meant to be 'consumed by the eye', with the possibility of a tactile interaction with the object which can be seen from a variety of angles.<sup>13</sup> Whilst the visual consumption of the object is maximised, the associated knowledge, unless narrated by an expert during the experience of looking, is minimised. The display offers an experience based more upon imagination and sensation.

Contrastingly, depicting the object as text and image in the 'Dairy Book' flattens the visual experience and, with the exception of some beautiful watercolour illustrations, monochromatises the images. Still, that has advantages: the drawing of the object can focus upon points of interest and the enlargement of details; sections can be extracted, such as Chinese script, which is turned from object decoration, so frequently imitated without understanding by European manufacturers, back into a script for comparison and translation.<sup>14</sup>

The inclusion of textual description can give detail to the narrative associated with the piece, and is able to accommodate cross-reference and addenda; it also preserves the collection, now lost, in perpetuity.

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<sup>13</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), quoted in Cavanaugh, 'The Queen's Nécessaire', *Cultural Aesthetics*, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the fake Chinese script that decorates some doorways on the first floor of the Brighton Pavilion.

Poems about China and Chinese things reveal different kinds of mantling that at times complement and at others challenge the 'Dairy Book'. 'A Specimen of Picturesque Poetry in Chinese Inscribed on the Cup in the Possession of Lady Banks, and dedicated to her Ladyship by the Translator S. W' is a parallel document that includes abstracted line drawings of the porcelain from the collection with the Chinese script inscribed upon them.<sup>15</sup> The pencil drawings are anonymous and so it is impossible to tell whether Weston drew them to supplement his poetical analysis, or by Lady or Joseph Banks in an effort to record the translated script or, perhaps, to practise writing Chinese script. The text complements the reading of the 'Dairy Book' and is an example of the way in which the 'Dairy Book' interplays between catalogue and compendium.

Stephen Weston (1747-1830) was a noted linguist who examined, unsuccessfully, the Rosetta Stone; he was also a translator of Chinese poetry. Weston corresponded with Lady Banks on the nature of language and script, including reworking of the twenty-four letters of the Roman alphabet, gently mocking his own skills and pursuit in a reworked version of a parlour game.<sup>16</sup>

In 'A Specimen', the first page is a transcription of the Chinese into English. Reading from top to bottom, it is four vertical lines of seven characters.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> KA MSS Knatchbull Papers U951 Z37/2.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Weston to Dorothea, Lady Banks, 6 May 18, New South Wales, New South Wales State Library, *Joseph Banks Archive*, Series 95.09, Section 19. An example of his comic definition of the alphabet includes 'K – the herald's office that gives argument a title, & makes night knight'. The accompanying note, 'My Lady, I hope you approved of my first alphabet, & will do me the honour to accept my second', suggests that the letter was following a conversation or earlier exchange. The lack of preamble certainly demonstrates an easy familiarity. For examples of Weston's translation work, see, for example, *Ly Tang, an Imperial Poem, in Chinese, by Kien Lung, with a Translation and Notes by Stephen Weston* (London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1809). Weston's obituary recounts that he had commented upon Banks's analysis of a swan-roll, highlighting his inclusion in the enlightenment republic of letters. Weston considers the parity between Oriental and Occidental languages in *Conformity of European with Oriental Languages* (London: S. Rousseau, 1802; enlarged, 1803), although this focused on similarities between Persian, Sanskrit and European languages. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 147 (1830): 372.

<sup>17</sup> At about the same time as Weston undertook this translation work for Lady Banks, he published a short piece entitled *Fragments of Oriental Literature, with an Outline of a painting on a Curious China Vase* (London: S. Rousseau, 1807). A work that mostly studies Greek, Arabic and Persian, its frontispiece is Chinese. See appendix (p. 323).

He translates each of the characters, headed ‘English’, and retaining the same shape as the characters, without punctuation, on the subsequent page:

A	table	South
Cup	seated	high room
Well / minutely	hill	night
Examined	bent from	shower
Good	light	constant
Superior	eyes	begin
Flavour	illumine	Sun appear <sup>18</sup>

By retaining the same order as the Chinese characters, reading vertically, the reader of English enacts the Chinese method of reading; the text masquerades as a Chinese form, and so the reader of the translation bears the mantle of a Chinese reader. This series of English words is then transliterated into an early forerunner of pin-yin, entitled ‘The Names of the Chinese Characters, of which Seven Make a Verse’, giving a pronunciation key for the Chinese characters.

However, the word order and the characters’ meaning is transformed in the English poem, which is entitled ‘Version’, indicating its flexible, interpretative nature.

It rains all night, but in the morn returns  
Sol’s Orient beam, and darts its rising light  
Reflected from the hill, on your bright eyes,  
Whilst in your lofty chamber to the South  
Before your table placed, you sip the high  
Flavour’d souchong; and tow’ring ‘bove the wall  
Perch’d on a clump of bamboos, the Chay-koo sings.<sup>19</sup>

The Anglicised version performs a greater ‘Chinese-ness’, as the sun has ‘Orient Rays’ and the cup holds souchong tea, one of the most popularly drunk teas in

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<sup>18</sup> KA, MSS Knatchbull Papers U951 Z37/2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, ll.1-7.

London. Yet, souchong is an inexpertly chosen representation of Chinese tea: the name is a poor Anglicisation of the Chinese pronunciation *xiǎozhōng* or, in Cantonese, *síujúng*. Souchong was called black tea by Europeans on the basis of the colour of the leaf; yet the Chinese named it red tea on the basis of the colour of the brewed tea. It became the most famous tea in London, because its smoked leaves were easier to preserve during transportation; in China there were many hundreds of variations of tea, made from fresh rather than dried leaves.

The Anglicised poem evokes European versions of the blue China-ware, creating stereotypically orientalist scenes. It departs significantly from the original emphasis of the Chinese poem, which focused upon the thing-ness of the thing, creating a very narrow and confined interrelationship between text and object. The Chinese poem refers only to the cup, the traditional timing of tea drinking and the ritualistic patterns with which it was associated. When Weston reprinted the poem and translation in *The Englishman Abroad* (1824), he described the role of the arm-chair translator as a metaphorical explorer of abstract territory:

The Chinese tongue is to an European, who has never been in China,  
and has no occasion to go thither, more a language to be acquired by  
the eye, than the ear, and may be mastered for the purpose of  
knowing what it contains, if one has courage enough to scale the  
wall that surrounds it, and to force a way through the hedge of aloes,  
and prickly pears with which it is fenced.<sup>20</sup>

The Anglicised 'Version' has devolved away from its original meaning, becoming loose and exoticised, creating an unknown figure to whom the poem is addressed in the second person. The process of inspiration and the transition from object to text has taken the cup and its poem further from its Chinese meaning and brought it closer to the European vision of China: a decorative thing to be looked at.

In contrast to Weston's efforts in translating Chinese poetry written on porcelain, an example of addressing porcelain is found in Joanna Baillie's 'Lines To A

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Weston, *The Englishman Abroad* (London: J. P. Dove, 1824), p. 75.



Teapot' (c.1790).<sup>21</sup> Baillie conveys the prosaic object, a teapot, as an image of unfamiliarity, attaching to it a grand, exoticised narrative. She opens her poem with an evocation of 'many a vivid dye' (l.1), drawing on the colourful image that 'in easy progress leads the wandering eye' (l.2). Unlike the struggle for interpretation of the image in analysing the Imperial or Battle Jars in the 'Dairy Book', according to Baillie, these images readily invite and reward a rapid and easily processed perusal, instantly resulting in 'a distant nation's manners [...] beh[eld]' which is 'to the quick fancy whimsically told' (ll.3-4). Twenty lines are devoted to the description of the painted detail of a 'small-eyed beauty' (l.5) and the garden depicted on the surface of the eponymous teapot, which amount to 'a scene in short all soft delights to take in, a paradise for grave Grandee of Pekin': sensuality conveyed in sibilant sounds.

All is 'golden', 'in gay profusion', 'wonderous' (sic) and 'gorgeous'; every feeling is 'ease' and every thing is 'ready' for use and enjoyment: a utopian and heady vision, demonstrating the imaginative possibility offered by foreign objects (ll.6-22). Here, holding and beholding are subsumed as the female possessor of the porcelain object can hold it in her hand, study it and be transported to another world. Subject and object unite in domestic symbiosis. The teapot negates all the difficulties of travel and distance and emphasises the ease with which the mind can be transported; it is the poetical inheritor of the fantastical visions of Cathay inculcated by the European aesthetic for Chinoiserie.<sup>22</sup>

Baillie's only reference to the teapot as an object rather than as a conduit for an image is in five lines of description in which it becomes a metonym for the female owner: it is 'straight [and] small' with a 'body fair, Diverges with a smart vivacious air' and a 'fair subject', anthropomorphising the object (ll.17-18). The teapot is also 'round, arched [...] And dome-shaped with bud or button crowned',

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<sup>21</sup> Printed in Joanna Baillie, *Fugitive Verses* (London: E. Moxon, 1840), p. 161. The exact date of writing 'Lines to a Teapot' is uncertain. Simon Chaplin suggests that it was about 1790 in 'The Divine Touch or Touching Divines: John Hunter, David Hume, and the Bishop of Durham's Rectum', *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-century Views of Conception, Life, and Death*, ed. by Mary Terrall and Helen Deutsch (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), pp. 222-245, (p. 237).

<sup>22</sup> See Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961) and Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon, 1993).

evoking a sensual, corporeal image of femaleness, protected only by the sanitising phrase 'thou standest complete', which evokes porcelain's function as a metaphor for womanhood and virginity's fragility (ll.19-22). In addressing the teapot, Baillie seems to tell its story, but it is actually an imaginative monologue informed by stereotype and a vague vision of the Oriental, which then becomes a much more expansive narrative of trade.

Baillie's poem explicates how the meaning and function of an object is apparently transformed in transport. She evokes a vision of rustic, benign barbarism, which is a fantasy as, although porcelain making in China was an arduous task, it was a highly-skilled process and earned its makers a premium. Baillie imagines the teapot's 'natal day' on which 'the brown-skinned artist, with his unclothed waist', 'with magic skill / The whirling clay swift fashioned to his will' (ll.23-26). This god-like mysteriousness of method is reminiscent of either an African or Indian scene; the indeterminacy demonstrates a lack of distinction between different cultures and races. This reiterated in the image of the potter's audience 'clapping their naked sides with contro halloo / And curtailed words of praise, like ting, tung, too!' (ll.30-31).

The porcelain object becomes an inaccurate metaphor for the slave trade, subsumed into an amorphous anxiety about global trade. The teapot is 'packed in [...] with others of thy kind [...] / The Ocean thou has crossed, and thou mayest claim / the passing of the [Equatorial?] Line to swell thy fame [...] / Held up to public view in waving hand / of boastful auctioneer' (ll.37-45). The teapot possesses 'charms' which it has gained from being the chief of 'all thy train of vassal [sic] cups' and which, combined with the second person address and belonging to a 'kind', suggests that the porcelain is a metaphorical slave.

A romanticised vision imagines a 'ruling chieftain of them all' in 'the glory of thy high official days [...] / [r]ound whose supporting table gaily met / At close of eve, the young, the learned, the fair' (ll.50-55). Yet China was renowned for its meritocracy and bureaucracy and had little or no connection to slave trading.

The journey that the porcelain undertakes from tables of importance to ‘dull obscurity’ evokes another kind of slavery: the slaves to fashion that exist among ‘that changeful fleeting crowd’ who ‘wisely [...] forego the prize, / Since modern pin-money will scarce suffice / For all the trimmings, flounces, beads and lace, / The thousand needful things that needs must grace Her daily changed attire’ (ll.125-129). This criticism of rapidly changing taste is repeated in the ‘Dairy Book’. The final lines become a criticism of the porcelain’s descent into collectable, as ‘again have rival bidders on thee gazed, / But not the gay, the young, the fair, I trow! / No; sober connoisseurs, with wrinkled brow / And spectacles on nose, thy parts inspect, / And by grave rules approve thee or reject’ (ll.114-119). The poem satirises people such as Lady Banks and their methods of testing a piece of porcelain for age and authenticity as an invasive inspection of chastity. The line evokes the use of porcelain as a metaphor for female virginity, but here reinscribes the meaning back upon the porcelain vehicle.

The formalisation of porcelain connoisseurship is a poor second to its more significant use as social tool. Unlike the Emperor, who focuses upon the fragrance emanating from the contents of the porcelain vase, Baillie’s poem but briefly refers to the ‘fleeting perfume’ of the tea. Instead, it is the teapot that inspires sociability, as ‘then did bright wit and cheerful fancy play / With all the passing topics of the day. / So delicate, so varied and so free / Was the heart’s pastime, then inspired by thee’ (ll.93-98). The emphasis on liberty contrasts with the subsequent reference to the descent of an object as the middling sort could afford to buy it, as ‘in modern drawing-room, a board / May fragrant tea from menial hands afford’, most snobbishly de-investing the sociable meaning of the teapot as it becomes a tool in lesser hands (ll.104-105). This contrasts with Lady Banks’s attitude, which is concerned by the opposite issue: when ludicrous sums of money are exchanged for low quality porcelain.

Baillie describes the de-signification of porcelain removed from sight, as porcelain is placed ‘in nook unseen, / And pass[es] in hasty rounds our eyes before, / Thou in thy graceful state art seen no more’, reflecting the exhortation in the ‘Dairy Book’ to return the porcelain to view (ll.102-103). Unlike the ‘Dairy Book’, Baillie does not regard a shift to collection as restorative; rather, the poet

views it as reductive, employing similes of deactivation to convey the uselessness of display without use. Support for theories of porcelain ownership as performance of status is in evidence in Baillie's poem: 'And now on shelf / Of china closet placed [...] / Like moody statesman in his rural den / From power dismissed—like prosperous citizen [...] / Thou rest'st in most ignoble uselessness (ll.129-137).

The adjectival phrase that concludes the poem is in marked contrast to the 'Dairy Book's exhortation of 'that useful art'. The 'Dairy Book' argues:

If the fashion of fitting up Dairies continues, an immense mass of admirable Chinese Manufacture will be brought back again into sight, which would otherwise have lain dormant and absolutely useless in the Closets of the Country Houses of our Nobility and Gentry. (DB, pp. 5-6).

A gradation of types of display is revealed: the closet is differentiated from the porcelain dairy and a hierarchy of display methods is established. As the female role is envisaged in ending of the isolation of the aristocratic elite, a newly contributing aristocracy is depicted, sharing their resources in the advancement of trade and manufacture.

Baillie's emphasis on narrative echoes the determination of the 'Dairy Book' to tell the story of the images on the Imperial porcelain. Similarly, when translating the poem inscribed upon the cup, although it begins firmly located in a Chinese manner, even mimicking the reading experience of a Chinese speaker, the English 'Version' has made the poem about the drinker rather than the vessel and scenery, including bamboo and a Chinese bird, has been interpolated into the poem. The Chinese writing has been turned into a textual version of the scenes typically depicted on European blue China-ware, or the porcelain that was sent from the factories in Guanzong, or old Canton, to Europe: made gaudier in an effort to appeal to western tastes.

John Scott's *Oriental Eclogues* (1782) also creates an oriental topography littered with signs of foreignness. Scott admits in the advertisement:

This kind of composition is [...] subject to one disadvantage, for which allowance should be made. He, who describes what he has seen, may describe correctly: he, who describes what he has not seen, must depend for much on the accounts of others, and supply the rest from his own imagination.<sup>23</sup>

The sources of inspiration are considered the bones of a narrative which demand fleshing out, rather like the way in which the Chinese inscribed upon Lady Banks's Cup is transliterated, translated and then transformed as layers of creative meaning are inscribed upon a simpler version. The headnote of the first Eclogue states:

The learned and ingenious Mr. [William] Jones, in his elegant and judicious Essay on the Poetry of eastern Nations, speaking of the Arabians, has the following passage: 'It sometimes happens,' says he, 'that the young men of one tribe are in love with the damsels of another; and, as the tents are frequently removed on a sudden, the lovers are often separated in the progress of the courtship. Hence, almost all the Arabic poems open in this manner.'<sup>24</sup>

Scott declares that he:

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<sup>23</sup> John Scott, *The Poetical Works of John Scott Esq.*, 8 vols (London: J. Buckland, 1782), III, p. 124. Further references from this edition. Scott is aware of similarity between his and Collins's *Oriental Eclogues* (1757), but Collins apparently believed his own work 'had not in them one spark of Orientalism'. See Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, ed. by G. Birbeck Hill, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), III, p. 340. See also *The Poetical Works of Collins, Gray, and Beattie: With Lord Byron's English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, Hours of Idleness* (London: Baynes and Son, 1824): '[Collins] spoke with disapprobation of his Oriental Eclogues, as not sufficiently expressive of Asiatic manners, and called them his Irish Eclogues' (p. 6). Collins's *Oriental Eclogues* addresses only the setting of the Middle East; Scott's version traverses from Middle to Far East across the three eclogues.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Was struck with this outline [given by William Jones], and has attempted to fill it up [...] If any [...] there be who question the utility of at all describing those subjects; such may remember, that there is an eastern Poem, generally esteemed sacred, which abounds with the most ardent expressions of the one, and luxuriant pictures of the other.<sup>25</sup>

There is a dual lexis of cartography and porcelain decoration, as both cartographer and porcelain artist begins with a blank surface, creates an 'outline' and then attempts 'to fill it up', collapsing the difference between China as a place and china as a thing. Scott's *Eclogues* travel, as Jones did physically, from Middle East in the first eclogue, to East India in the second, and then, in the manner that Jones casts his mind from India towards China, Scott's eclogues reach China, where the main influence for the descriptive setting is the work of Du Halde, Jones's studies, and the porcelain arriving from China in Britain.

Scott's imagined journey from Middle to Far East is one of increasing distance but decreasing foreign savagery. The Oriental *Eclogues* begin with 'Zerad; or, The Absent Lover: an Arabian Eclogue', which depicts the stereotypically insatiable desires of the protagonist. The second eclogue is a more controversial anti-Imperial poem, 'Serim; or, the Artificial Famine: an East-Indian Eclogue', which describes the deleterious impact of Europeans upon 'a calm, contented, inoffensive race', as 'Europe's fell race control the wide domain, Engross the harvest, and enslave the swain.' The final eclogue is the most distant: the reader has travelled like the merchant or explorer from Middle to Far East to reach Chinese shores with 'Li-Po; or, The Good Governor: a Chinese Eclogue'. The setting, like Baillie's, recalls the images rendered on vases, as the poem describes:

[A] delightful scene![...]  
On azure rocks his rich pavilion plac'd,  
Rear'd its light front with golden columns grac'd;  
High o'er the roof a weeping willow hung,  
And jasmine boughs the lattice twin'd among [...]

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

Led up steep rocks by painted bridges join'd.<sup>26</sup>

The reference to blue rocks, pavilions, weeping willows, jasmine and lattice-work particularly evokes the scenes typically shown on blue-and-white porcelain. The interpolation of detail inscribes greater gaudiness (my italics):

Gay shoals of gold-fish *glitter'd* in the tide,  
And *gaudy* birds flew sportive by its side.  
The distant prospects well the sight might please,  
With pointed mountains, and *romantic* trees [...]  
And tall *pagodas*.<sup>27</sup>

The difficulty of the imaginative process is overcome with the objects and texts that emerged from and about China, facilitated by Du Halde's *History of China* (1738) and porcelain objects. Li-Po, the poem's fictitious Chinese government official, comments, 'This scene [...] How fair! To please the sight / How Nature's charms, Art's ornaments unite!'<sup>28</sup> Although referring to the scene of feminine delights, from which Li-Po virtuously withdraws, it could also be describing a porcelain jar. The final eclogue emphasises the virtue of Chinese government in contrast to the barbarism of the Middle East, the victim-hood and weakness of East India and the rapaciousness of Europe. This subtle evocation of porcelain corresponds with the longstanding trope in British literature of porcelain as representing virtue and chastity, due to its purity, whiteness, and irreparability and devaluation upon breaking.

The relationship between porcelain and poetry was conceived quite differently in China. The Emperor used porcelain images to imagine how China had looked in the past.

Qian-Long wrote over two hundred poems in praise of porcelain, as well as inscribing poems of his devising upon important antique porcelain pieces.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 155-56.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

Typically, the poem would be about the porcelain on which it was written and/or the veneration of the unknown technology that forged the antique porcelain.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Chinese theories of containers had established a complex signification since the Bronze Age. Ding vessels from this period have traditionally been ascribed corporeal qualities: the handles ‘ears’ and the stands ‘legs’ and these objects became divining things able to act as a repository for the spoken word. Qian-Long thus perceived ancient receptacles, both bronze and porcelain, to possess dialogic properties, with he could engage by adding his own script to ancient pieces.<sup>30</sup>

When writing upon porcelain, the text becomes part of the object. A celebration of the excellence of the vase for its qualities as the porcelain, the poem is also akin to a hymn celebrating a deific object literally idolised. The ideal qualities of the porcelain facilitate the performance of its function, such as to store flowers to create an aromatic haze that separates the Emperor from the dirt and smells of the exterior and mundane world. Simple lexis reflects the clean lines of the vase and its prosaic but important duty. It highlights the extent to which Weston’s ‘Version’ of the poem inscribed upon Lady Banks’s cup has been dressed by the author in exotic, Oriental images and overlaid with a decorative lexis that transforms the poem into a form more reminiscent of translations of classical poetry.<sup>31</sup>

Attaching the text to the ‘Dairy Book’ and the porcelain collection, Weston’s poem belongs to European porcelain collecting culture rather than with the restrained and direct translations he includes in some of his other translations. The process of translation of the poem on the cup has taken the reader through an approximate experience of reading Chinese, but with each step in the process, the

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<sup>29</sup> Yu Peichin, ‘Consummate Images: Emperor Qianlong’s Vision of the ‘Ideal’ Kiln, *Orientalism*, 42.8 (November/December 2011): 80-88.

<sup>30</sup> See appendix for an example of the Emperor’s poetry (p. 322). The traditional Chinese character to express ‘Ding’ has an outline like a Ding vessel, exemplifying the blurring between text and image that so intrigued eighteenth-century analysts of the Chinese language. It is possible that Lady Banks’s Cup could have been the work of the Emperor himself; certainly, it could have been made in imitation of his practice.

<sup>31</sup> William Jones explores this form of hybridity in his assessment of Oriental poetry and the way in which the strengths of Oriental and Classical literatures could be combined with British creative flair to form a novel and superior form of poetry.



signs destabilise until the final 'Version' signifies the European vision of China rather than the evocation of the Chinese tea-drinking rituals and valorisation of porcelain. Like the porcelain decorated to European taste that Lady Banks so despises, the poem has been subject to decorative application that has made it richer and more 'gaudy', depriving it of its authentic simplicity. By dressing the poem in a Chinese mantle, it is more thoroughly Weston's creation, representative of the writer rather than of China after the text has undergone this process of Europeanisation, whether intentional or not.

# Satire

## Introduction

### **Dressing up Texts: the Satirical Chinese Texts Of William Chambers and Peter Pindar**

As early as 1711, Addison envisioned that the *Spectator* would extend the work of Socrates who ‘brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and Coffee-Houses’.<sup>1</sup> It was in these locations that satirical writing, political and intellectual humour and topical comedy were shared and enjoyed as people met to read and read out the latest publications.<sup>2</sup> These arenas facilitated the dynamic network of exchanges in which satire functioned as a display of verbal dexterity that could make or break reputations, with friends seizing their pens in defence of their allies against their enemies. Satire could create and reveal intellectual alliances and opposition. It was a vibrant politico-cultural exchange, endlessly neoteric, that was regarded with equal reactions of humour and outrage to current affairs in what Steven Jones describes as ‘promiscuous opportunism’ that at the same time contributes to ‘taste-making’.<sup>3</sup>

China and the Chinese taste held, at various points during the eighteenth century, a particularly heightened political, cultural and social resonance with popular culture, of which key moments might include the Chinoiserie craze during the 1750s and 1760s; the presence of the renowned Chinese sculptor of celebrities and aristocrats in London named Tan Chet [also known as Chit] Qua, during 1769 and 1770; and the Embassies to China that occurred between 1792 and 1794, and between 1816 and 1817.

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<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, No 10 (12 March, 1711): 44. See Michael Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour* (London: Sage, 2005), pp. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> See Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Steven E. Jones, ‘Introduction’, *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 3, 8.

As Frank Palmeri suggests:

The series of related narrative forms that succeed one another in prominence throughout the eighteenth-century satire, history, and the novel of self-cultivation [...] are characteristic of a period, can indicate a prevailing paradigm of knowledge. The history of genres, especially their coming to prominence and their subsiding into disuse, may reveal shifts in underlying paradigms, the largely unwritten rules that delimit and shape what can be thought, written, and seen as true in different period.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, David Nokes proposes that ‘satire must always have an object to satirise and hence exists in a direct critical relationship with the society which produces it. As a genre it is teleological rather than ontological, finding its own full meaning only in relation to meanings outside itself’.<sup>5</sup> The adoption of a Chinese mantle facilitates the movement towards self-realisation through a satirical juxtaposition that reveals similarity and dissimilarity through dissimulation.

In 1779, James Beattie wrote that when a person sees something funny, laughter ‘always proceeds from a sentiment or emotion, excited in the mind, in consequence of certain objects or ideas being presented to it’ (304); this ‘seems to arise from the view of things incongruous united in the same assemblage’ (318).<sup>6</sup> It is easy to see why the light-hearted nature of British understanding of Chinese objects and images, with their fantastical elements, could excite a humorous response.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Frank Palmeri, ‘The Metamorphoses of Satire in Eighteenth-Century Narrative’, *Comparative Literature*, 48.3 (Summer, 1996): 237-264, (p. 238).

<sup>5</sup> David Nokes, *Raillery and Rage: A Study of Eighteenth Century Satire* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> James Beattie, *Essay on Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition* (1764; this edn. London: W. Creech and E. and C. Dilly, 1776).

<sup>7</sup> In *Robinson Crusoe*, a Chinese idol is described as ‘an incongruous monster; it had feet, hands, fingers, claws, legs, arms, wings, ears, horns, everything mixed one among another, neither in the shape or place that Nature appointed but blended together.’ *The*

Chineseness and Britishness united in the same assemblage become the subject and object of laughter at incongruity and at dissemblance through feigned appearances. As Rawson argues, ‘Satire [...] is a learned art: elaborately allusive, cunning in secret stings and subtle indirections [...] and [...] an instrument of aggression. The custom seems to have generated a pleasure in the exercise of insult [...] which might be described as *aesthetic*’ (my italics).<sup>8</sup> This notion of the satiric as aesthetic, of artful contrivance, enhances the parallel between adopting a Chinese mantle in one’s home and that of the figurative adoption of a Chinese mantle within a satiric text.

The most well-known example of satirical textual disguise can be found in Goldsmith's *A Citizen of the World* (1760). Goldsmith employs the trope of the exterior, foreign commentator upon the European way of life who possesses authority based on the perceived social, political and cultural advancement of Imperial China compared to other newly-discovered lands around the globe.<sup>9</sup> English writers adopted the trope from French creators of a Chinese tourist travelling in Europe, although Goldsmith takes the name of his character from a short pamphlet by Horace Walpole, *A Letter from Xo Ho: A Chinese Philosopher at London, to His Friend Altangi at Peking* (1757).<sup>10</sup>

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*Works of Daniel De Foe* ed. by W. Hazlitt. 3 vols (London: John Clements, 1840), II, p. 41. The description echoes the fears of Shebbeare, who is worried about maternal imprinting but, as by the second half of the eighteenth century, such views were considered archaic, they could be a source of laughter rather than fear or bemusement.

<sup>8</sup> C. J. Rawson, ‘Introduction’, *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1984), p. v.

<sup>9</sup> In *A Chinese Fragment: Containing an Enquiry into the Present State of Religion in England* (London: J. Davis, 1786), Ely Bates created a commentary on the apparent collapse of religious belief. Bates ventriloquises a Chinese man in order to critique English religious practice: ‘I find myself in the midst of a nation, not without noble instances of learning and abilities of every kind, but immoral in a high degree, and uninspired with devotion’ (p. 365). Whilst there may be some latent humour in the incongruity of a Chinese heathen who knows and understands the Christian faith better than those born into the religion, the overt purpose was to shock and shame an English readership.

<sup>10</sup> Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* (1721) were the primary source of inspiration for Goldsmith, followed closely by Jean Baptiste de Boyer (Marquis d’Argens), *Chinese Letters. Being a Philosophical, Historical, and Critical Correspondence Between a Chinese Traveller at Paris, and His Countrymen in China, Muscovy, Persia and Japan. Translated [...] Into [or Rather, Written In] French, by the Marquis D’Argens [...] and Now Done Into English* (London: D. Browne, 1741). After Goldsmith’s publication, the

Goldsmith's narrator and protagonist is both amiable and possesses a strong sense of morality, and so offers readers the comfort of the universal nature of civilisation above savagery. With irony, he bewails: 'Some fancy me no Chinese, because I am formed more like a man than a monster [...] Strange, they say [...] he must be some Englishman in disguise; his very visage has nothing of the true exotic barbarity'.<sup>11</sup> The comment reveals the author's charade to be his comfort with universalism: Altangi is clearly an Englishman in disguise. Still, Goldsmith defends obliquely his imposture, distinguishing between the comic element of his work and the false religious doctrines which he criticises through his mouthpiece Altangi: 'It is remarkable that the propagators of false [religious] doctrines have ever been averse to mirth, and always begin by recommending gravity when they intended to disseminate imposture'.<sup>12</sup> He advocates that 'the wise bustle and laugh as they walk in the pageant, but fools bustle and are important'; knowing and self-deprecating laughter is an essential component to dressing up in finery or masques.<sup>13</sup> Goldsmith establishes an aura of nobility in the idea of playful, self-aware disguise.

These particular Chinese mantles offer one method of appropriating Chineseness: the narrator-commentator as naïve but mostly or wholly civilised. If there is a failure of perceived politeness, it is due to issues of language and custom rather than intention: 'The Chinese are always concise, so is he [...] The Chinese are grave and sententious, so is he'.<sup>14</sup>

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Frenchman Ange Goudar wrote *The Chinese Spy; Or, Emissary from the Court of Peking, Commissioned to Examine Into the Present State of Europe* (1765), probably influenced by Goldsmith's work: Goudar lived in London between 1761 and 1764.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World* (1760; London: J. and R. Childs, 1820), p. 176. The Chinese philosopher Altangi as fictional informant has been discussed by Christopher Brooks, 'Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*: Knowledge and the Imposture of 'Orientalism,' *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, 35 (1993): 124-44; Charles A. Knight, 'Ironic Loneliness: The Case of Goldsmith's Chinaman', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 82 (1983): 347-64; David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 136-42. See also James Watt's 'Goldsmith's Cosmopolitanism', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 28.3 (Winter 2004): 56-75.

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World*, p. 255.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>14</sup> 'Preface', *Citizen of the World*, p. ii.

Likewise, *A Chinese Fragment* warns: ‘the Editor has remarked some improprieties in the language [...] [as the Chinese] was probably a man who paid more attention to things than words, and who, perhaps, had not acquired a very accurate knowledge of the English tongue’.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, when the architect and Royal Academician William Chambers and the doctor and satirist John Wolcot, better known as Peter Pindar, adopted a Chinese mantle and ventriloquised the Chinese voice, they created something other than a figure to act as a straightforward external commentator on British or European practices. Goldsmith lifted his inspiration from French writers; Chambers and Pindar adopt real figures for their disguises. Their satirical mantles also draw more specifically on Anglo-Chinese relations. In *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening, to which is Annexed an Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-qua*, Chambers pretends to be Tan Chet-Qua, a Chinese man who was living and working in London between 1769 and 1772. Pindar draws his inspiration from current politics, particularly the Macartney and Amherst Embassies of 1792 and 1816, and ventriloquises the Emperor of China and Chinese envoys; in some poems, Pindar adopts a complete Chinese mantle by pretending the text was authored by the Chinese Emperor.

As an architect, William Chambers was responsible for, among many other designs, Chinese flourishes in the re-configuring and re-building of the aristocracy’s houses. Having travelled extensively with the Swedish East India Company, including three voyages to the East, with two stops in Canton, and having studied in France and Italy, Chambers was omnivorous in taste and inspiration: he drew from classical, oriental and rococo fashions in the creation of his own designs. He published a number of texts on the subject of architecture and gardening: *Designs of Chinese buildings, furniture, dresses, machines, and utensils: to which is annexed a description of their temples, houses, gardens, &c* (1757); *A Treatise on Civil Architecture in which the Principles of that Art are laid down and illustrated by a great number of plates accurately designed and elegantly engraved by the best hands* (1759); *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surrey* (1763); and *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772) and *A Dissertation on Oriental*

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<sup>15</sup> Advertisement to the Reader, *A Chinese Fragment*, p. v.

*Gardening, to which is annexed an Explanatory Discourse By Tan Chet-qu*  
(1773).

In his architectural and design work, Chambers was an advocate for ornate over-mantels and mantelpieces: they were a vehicle for elaborate carving, decorative embellishments and for encoding details about the tastes and interests of the mantle-owner.<sup>16</sup> In the second edition of *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, Chambers adopts a figurative mantle creating an unusual textual masquerade. He takes on the mantle of a Chinese man in London renowned for his ability to sculpt innovative porcelain figures. Tan Chet-Qua could not speak or write English, but his supposed views on Oriental gardening are ‘annexed’ to the second edition of Chambers’s *Dissertation*; this ‘annexation’ is a fiction.<sup>17</sup>

As Chambers was one of the most famous architects of the period, so Peter Pindar was one of the most popular satirical poet of his day: at the height of his fame, twenty to thirty thousand of his works were in print. He thus wielded significant influence over the reading public, shaping as well as reflecting the zeitgeist.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Those who employed Chambers to give Chinese accents to their homes included the Duchess of Queensbury. See London, British Library (BL), BL Add MS Letter-books of Sir William Chambers, architect, November 1772 BL AD MS 41134 fol. 2. Chambers was particularly innovative in the design of chimney-pieces. See John Harris, ‘Chambers, Sir William (1722–1796)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Chambers had a slight interest in porcelain from China, as he wrote to Captain Barkley on September 13th 1772 that ‘the tea set he was so obliging to bring from Canton it came safe to hand tho Sir William apprehends some part of it must have been forgot on board or was perhaps incomplete at first as here came no slop bason nor cream pot the whole being 2 cups & saucers, 2 plates & a small sugar bason. If any part of it should remain, Sir William begs Capt Barkley would enquire about it. William Chambers to Capt. Barkley, 13 September 1772, BL AD MS 41134 fol. 2.

<sup>18</sup> When *Pindariana* was printed in 1794 by Thomas Spilsbury for Walker and James Bell, J. Ladley, and Mr Jeffrey, an impressive 42,500 copies were printed, costing £189 18s, with an additional £9 2s 1½d to cover Stamp Duty and copies to the Stationers’ Hall; it indicates the enormous readership that Pindar commanded. D. Kerr, “‘Satire is Bad Trade’: Dr John Wolcot and his Publishers and Printers in Eighteenth-Century England”, *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text*, 12 (Summer 2004): 29–61. <[www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/journals/corvey/articles/cc12\\_n02.pdf](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/journals/corvey/articles/cc12_n02.pdf)> [Accessed 20 June 2012]. Kerr does, however, observe that not everything went smoothly, as the sum of £238 4s 6d stands out as representing returned copies of *Pindariana*, some 13,235 copies. Nonetheless, this still equates to sales numbering 29 265.

As a commentator on contemporary politics, culture and society, Pindar naturally turned to the craze for China. In a series of poems targeting China, Pindar gives voice to the Emperor and pretends to translate texts by him. Although Pindar makes references to China, porcelain and other Chinese materials in his poems, his interest was not in the fashion for the Chinese aesthetic in the manner of Goldsmith and Chambers. Rather, when China became an intense political issue during the first and second British diplomatic missions to China, Pindar addressed the subject of China in a 'Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and His Ship' (1792). A critique of the endeavour, the poem is characterised by great foresight: the preface declares 'the horrid picture of the future disappointment of our Ambassador [...] at Pekin [...] we hope to be merely a playful sketch of fancy'.<sup>19</sup>

Lord Macartney's Embassy departed in January 1792; he was the first official British ambassador to meet the Emperor. The Embassy was only marginally successful, as the British refused to kowtow and the Emperor refused to see them unless they did, leading to a series of negotiations and the invention of an elaborate form of showing deference. A clash of perspectives prevailed: the Emperor of China regarded himself as supreme ruler and King George III as a subordinate, semi-colonial subject. The British Embassy believed the reverse. During the Embassy, it confirmed that there was very little that China required of Britain in terms of manufacturing and invention, which deepened the great anxiety amongst the British about the increasing trade deficit that appeared to threaten the British economy. Pindar subsequently wrote *Odes to Kien Long* (1794), in which he identifies the paltriness of the trading possibilities with China. Finally, in 1817, in response to the Amherst Embassy of the same year, Pindar wrote 'A Contest of Legs, or Diplomats in China' and 'A most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China'.<sup>20</sup> The difference between the poems reflects changing attitudes in Britain to China.

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<sup>19</sup> Pindar, *Works*, III, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Pindar, *The Contest of Legs; Or Diplomats in China. In a Letter from Zephaniah Bull at Canton to John Bull at Home* (1817; reprint London: British Library, Historical Print Editions, 2011); *A Most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1817).



The move from fictional ‘Chinese’ in Goldsmith’s *A Citizen of the World* (1760) to real persons in Chambers’s and Pindar’s work introduces the Chinese individuals’ personal history and character. In Chambers’s masquerade, Tan Chet-Qua had a real, commanding artistic reputation in eighteenth-century London. Similarly, the habits of the Emperor, his taste for poetry and his attitude to politics, were known through the texts and letters sent back from China. By ventriloquising real Chinese figures, the authors play with what is known and unknown about the figure, including a reader’s assumptions and prejudices. In comparison, the composite character in Goldsmith’s *A Citizen of the World* (1760) played upon the more general knowledge and prejudices of their readership and their assumed attitudes towards China as a whole.

Although inspired somewhat by the trope of the Chinese character established by his friend Oliver Goldsmith, Chambers does not adopt the mantle of Chineseness for social commentary; for him, it is a brief foray in order to attract attention for a new philosophy of gardening. His original treatise explicates a philosophy of gardening that has a double function as an inspiration and allegory for a philosophy of beauty, imagination and the mind, and its evolution and shaping by external influence. Chambers added the controversial ventriloquisation of Tan Chet-Qua to the second edition, which marks the work as significantly different from his earlier, formal and pedagogical texts such as the *Treatise on Civil Architecture and Chinese Designs* (1759). His playfulness points to alternative intent, which extends beyond mere educative manual to draw out allegory.

In rejecting the idea of creating a naive but educated commentator, Peter Pindar eschews entirely Goldsmith’s methodology. He also discards the idea of a characterless voice such as Ely Bates’s ‘Our Chinese’ or the idea that China is a model of virtue as Horace Walpole suggests when pretending to be Xo Ho writing to Altangi.<sup>21</sup> Instead, Pindar uses the Emperor and Imperial China as an equivalent example of British monarchical and governmental perversity and inadequacy, with all power and power structures as equal proponents of abuse,

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<sup>21</sup> Horace Walpole, *A Letter from Xo Ho: A Chinese Philosopher at London, to His Friend Altangi at Peking* (London: J. Graham, 1757). The letter’s fictional recipient inspired the name of Goldsmith’s character.

failure and absurdity. Foreign and domestic failure offer equal targets for criticism through satirical dismantlement.

The use of a Chinese mask by Chambers and Pindar supports Terry Castle's suggestion that the eighteenth-century obsession with masques and masquerade 'were in the deepest sense a kind of collective meditation on self and other, and an exploration of their mysterious dialectic [...] [and] the pleasure of the masquerade attended on the experience of doubleness, the alienation of inner from outer, a fantasy of two bodies simultaneously and thrillingly present, self and other together, the two in one'.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, her contention that 'the true self remained elusive and inaccessible – illegible – within its fantastical encasements' is contradicted by the assertions of original self beneath the masque by Chambers and Pindar: both writers ensure that their selfhood can be perceived beneath the masque. Pindar even does this with his own pseudonym, ultimately revealing his true identity as John Wolcot.<sup>23</sup>

The 'value of theatricalised eastern perspectives to western visions of selfhood', identified by Chi-Ming Yang, proves useful, although she focuses upon 'the highly mediated acts of looking' at spectacles of performance of Chineseness.<sup>24</sup> Here, I wish to draw attention to the highly mediated act of laughing in the appropriation and negotiation of Chineseness and its relationship to Britain. Both looking and laughing are defined by taste and judgement, and manuals were

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<sup>22</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> The ability to see beneath the masque is exhibited by Mr Flutter in Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem: A comedy as acted at the Theatre Royal, in Covent Garden*, as he can accurately penetrate the outfit belonging to the son of an orange seller, as he remarks to Lady Frances, 'D'ye see that figure strutting in the dress of an Emperor? His father retails oranges in Botolph-lane'. The image of the orange-seller turned Emperor evokes the Bakhtinian carnivalesque whilst also offering a snapshot of the evolving process from alienation to assimilation that global exchange brings: during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, oranges were an alien and rarefied thing of luxury; now they are mere trade-things, and prosaic. It is unclear whether the orange seller is dressing up as an emperor of Rome, China or Ottoman. If it were either of the latter two options, then the orange seller would be adopting the new signs of exotic luxury: the Middle and Far East. Hannah Cowley, *The Belle's Stratagem: A comedy as acted at the Theatre Royal, in Covent Garden* (London: Cadell, 1787), p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> Chi-Ming Yang, *Performing China*, p. 7.

published on how and at what to laugh as well as on art and artistic judgment.<sup>25</sup> Laughter, the ways in which people laughed, and the agents and objects of laughter were diverse and changing during the eighteenth century. Katherine Mannheimer has argued that ‘eighteenth-century satire was to perform a kind of visual pedagogy on the reader - by engaging the reader’s visual imagination, but also by controlling the reader’s actual immediate acts of looking and seeing’, casting the satirist as a mediator negotiating ‘power and desire, social and sexual politics’.<sup>26</sup> In this way, controlling looking at China and Chinese objects, the satirist could broker power, whether aesthetical in the case of Chambers or socio-political in the case of Pindar; satire is visually coercive.

Satire possesses a liminality that lends itself to the negotiation between East and West; it has ‘always placed itself between laughter and its opposites, the respective sides represented by the comic and tragic mask’.<sup>27</sup>

Kay Himberg argues satire deserves a ‘third mask, an icon of its own’.<sup>28</sup> Pindar creates a particular mask formed by fake Chinese poems which he then pretends

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<sup>25</sup> The major texts which instructed the eighteenth-century readership on the art of laughter included Lord Shaftesbury’s *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor*, (1709); the oft reprinted *Thoughts on Laughter* (1725) by Frances Hutcheson; Fielding’s *Essay on Conversation* (1743); the third book of Mark Akenside’s poem *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744); the anonymous *Essay on Laughter, wherein are Displayed, its Natural and Moral Causes, with the Arts of Exciting it* (1769); Beattie’s *Essay on Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition* (1769; 1776; 1779). As Vic Gatrell notes in *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth Century London*, comparatively little is published after 1779 until Hazlitt’s *Letters on English Comic Writers* (1819) and Basil Montagu’s *Thoughts on Laughter* (1830), which reflects the declining fashion for didactic tracts on polite and civil behaviour (Gatrell, *City of Laughter*; p. 169). Such theories directly and indirectly influenced Chambers and Pindar.

<sup>26</sup> Katherine Mannheimer, *Print, Visuality and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Satire: The Scope in Ev’ry Page* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Kay Himberg, “‘Against the Spleen’: Sterne and the Tradition of Remedial Laughter”, *A History of English Laughter: Laughter from Beowulf to Becket and Beyond*, ed. by Manfred Pfister (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 69-82 (p. 76). Similarly, Werner von Koppenfels describes satire as being able to be a ‘mask for meanness’ in ‘Nothing is ridiculous but what is deformed’: Laughter as a Test of Truth in Enlightenment Satire’, *A History of English Laughter*, pp. 57-67 (p.62). Likewise, Ulrich Broich identifies satire as possessing between-ness: ‘It stands between the unrealistic form and content of [...] Epic and heroic tragedy, and the realistic genres of the novel, domestic tragedy, comedy and biography. In its subject-matter. I lean towards the realistic, but by alienating its reality it links itself to the epic. In this manner it becomes a polyphonic, hybrid genre of its own’. *The Eighteenth-century Mock Heroic Poem*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> Himberg, p. 76.

to translate; he uses alterity to expose domestic corruption and contamination from within.

The textual Oriental disguise thus departs from the crude and primitive ethnography and the ‘symbolic joining of races [that] could conceivably be construed as a perverse allusion to empire’, as well as the potential for homage that Castle identifies in more literal adoptions of Oriental dress.<sup>29</sup> Ethnography demands an interest, successfully enacted or not, in the authentic: Pindar utilises stereotypes, extremes and the absurd in order to draw parallels between the flaws in Occidental and Oriental systems and to expose the ridiculousness of an overweening interest in foreign relations and the creation of embassies when serious domestic issues prevailed. As Nokes suggests, ‘satire [...] involves the subversion of an image or statement through the evocation of a standard of values drawn from outside. There is an implicit appeal to a normative judgement which is different from the ostensible values presented on the surface of the work or text’.<sup>30</sup>

During the near quarter of a century that elapsed between Chambers’s and Pindar’s publications, changes in attitudes to China help to identify clear patterns and particulars in their appropriation of Oriental disguise and ventriloquism. Both Chambers and Pindar use the same poem, *The Praise of the City of Moukden*, supposedly written by the Emperor Kien Long and translated by the French Jesuit Amiot, then published in English in 1770; however, the poem serves the two writers in different ways. For Chambers, this was the latest poetry available from China; for Pindar, it was old news, but he still used it as a source of inspiration for his poetical ribaldry.

Pindar uses the poem *The Praise of the City of Moukden*, which had been included in Chambers’s footnote as a false marker of Oriental authenticity, to inspire a series of piercing poems, supposedly Chinese, which attempt to dismantle the glories of royalty, imperialism and aristocratic tastes, behaviours and attitudes. In the hope of informing and amusing his British readership, Pindar aimed to break

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<sup>29</sup> Castle, *Masquerade*, p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> Nokes, *Raillery and Rage*, p. 27.

the public and political fascination with foreignness that seemed to him to prevail at the expense of focusing on domestic problems. In particular, he was incredulous that such money, effort and emphasis was being placed on Macartney's Embassy in 1792 at a time of domestic and European political crisis, something that will be explored further in the second chapter of this section. Contrastingly, Chambers was firmly located within the establishment, and the London elite uncapped their pens in his defence when his Chinese disguise elicited satirical opprobrium. Chambers presents a domestic concern, the design of gardens, as a national and international issue of taste; he also uses the Chinese mantle as an allegorical disguise for a more profound philosophy of the mind. Pindar recasts an international political issue, the nature of Embassies and monarchical and imperial power, in a mockingly prosaic manner, in order to engage in political dismantling.

## Chapter Six

### William Chambers and the Art and Philosophy of Gardening

Chambers's *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening to which is Annexed an Explanatory Discourse* (1773) was published in an era of waning obsession with Chinoiserie. Fashion was becoming increasingly heterogenous; the Chinese aesthetic, although still popular, was becoming sublimated into other styles such as the rococo, an aesthetic distinct from the Chinese taste.<sup>1</sup> This decline in popularity may account for Richard E. Quaintance Jr.'s observation that 'Chambers's ventriloquism is both more defensive and more aggressive than what we find in *The Citizen of the World*; the Preface here in his own voice admits sensitivity to the 'abuse' which the Dissertation had incurred for its scenic fantasy'.<sup>2</sup>

Chambers's humorous text serves as a complex commentary upon novelty, taste and authenticity. The satirical texts that appeared in reply to Chambers's ventriloquising publication reveal the vibrant exchanges that such publications elicited. The *Dissertation* and *Explanatory Discourse* were printed during a period of criticism of the landscaper Capability Brown and Chambers's personal rival, Robert Adam. Adam and his brother had just published *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam* in 1773, in which they declared:

The novelty and variety of the following designs will [...] justify  
our conduct in communicating them to the world. We have not

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<sup>1</sup> See Arnold Hauser, *Social History of Art, Volume 3: Rococo, Classicism and Romanticism*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 1999). 'Romantic-era neoclassicism, with its emphasis on outline, favored the rational, masculine and ordered, and it fought on those terms for dominance over competing styles; practitioners of which feminized the "fripery" of French rococo, the luxurious Orientalism of Chinoiserie, and the heavy gothic of Britain's own past', Thora Brylowe, 'Romantic arts & letters: British print, paint, engraving, 1760—1830' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Carnegie Mellon University, 2009), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *An Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-Qua, of Quang-Chew-Fu*, ed. by Richard Quaintance Jr. (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1978), pp. 10-11. The only twentieth-century edition of William Chambers's *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1773), published in 1978, is edited and introduced by Richard Quaintance, with an enlightening commentary. Further references from this edition.

trod in the paths of others, nor derived aid from their labours. In works which we have had the honour to execute [...] even with the imitation of other artists [...] have brought about, in this country, a kind of revolution in the whole system of this useful and elegant art.<sup>3</sup>

Adam's obituary in 1792 in the *Universal Magazine* notes that 'this language [was] thought too assuming by some', and this included William Chambers.<sup>4</sup> Revealing the rivalry between the designers, Chambers noted:

Messieurs Adam have lately published a book of their ornaments with a preface rather presumptuous, as I am told; for I have not yet read the book; in which they boast of having first brought true style of Decoration into England and that all Architects of the present day are only servile copiers of their [Adams's] excellence. I do not agree with them.<sup>5</sup>

Chambers's re-publication of his text with the addition of dressing himself up as Tan Chet-Qua challenged the Adams's belief in their work as a universal inspiration. Chambers mimics, albeit falsely, the oriental style that Robert Adams particularly detested, in order to promote Chambers's personal philosophy that genius was inspired by preceding genius and that no idea formed in isolation, as the Adams brothers claimed theirs had. By adopting a Chinese mantle and dressing up his text as pretending inspiration from Chinese gardening, Chambers was proving how widely one could cast one's net for valid inspiration.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Tobias George Smollett, *The Critical Review, Or, Annals of Literature*, 36 (1773): 193.

<sup>4</sup> *Universal Magazine*, 93 (1793): 273.

<sup>5</sup> William Chambers to Lord Grantham, March, 1773, BL Add MS Letter-books, 41135 fol. 3. Further evidence of their mutual enmity is revealed in John Adam's observation in 1756 that 'a book of Chinese affairs [that] he is publishing cannot raise his reputation high among the truly learned in architecture', J. Fleming, *Robert Adam and his Circle in Edinburgh and Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 359. It also highlights Montagu's success in convincing Adam to meet her desire for her rooms to be decorated in the Chinese taste.

Although presented in self-deprecating terms, Chambers was rather proud of his 'little book', as he refers to it in his letters, and actively promoted its publication and attempted to solicit support from respected intellectuals.

He sent an early copy to Voltaire, and Chambers ensured publication in France via his publisher in France, Julien-David Le Roy, who also sent it to Madame du Boccage, the leading female writer and intellectual of eighteenth-century France.<sup>6</sup> Chambers also sent the work to Frederick Chapman, Master Builder to his Majesty the King of Sweden at Stockholm, stating, again with false modesty, 'I have lately published a little dissertation on Gardening'.<sup>7</sup> The discourse reached Senator C. F. Schuffer at Stockholm. Chambers wrote to him on 21 July 1773:

Mr Chapman acquainted me [...] that your Excellency had at last received the books, he will now have the honour of presenting two copies of the second edition of my *Oriental Gardening*, one for his Majesty, the other for you; it is somewhat more correct than the first Edition, and Augmented by an Explanatory Discourse.<sup>8</sup>

The letter demonstrates the dissemination of ideas and fashion across networks of the elite aristocracy by which Chambers could spread his ideas and his reputation. Chambers used established connections: he was born in Gothenburg, and his father was a businessman there.

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<sup>6</sup> Chambers's dissertation, with the annexation by the fictional version of Tan Chet-Qua, was listed in the catalogue of Elizabeth Vesey's library, which acknowledges in its very title her association with Mrs Montagu and the blue stocking circle. *The Library of Mrs. Elizabeth Vesey, 1715-1791. The first of the blue-stockings, the friend of Laurence Sterne, Horace Walpole, Goldsmith, Gray, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mrs. Montagu, etc., etc., and the hostess of Dr. Johnson and the 'club'* (Newcastle-on-Tyne: W. H. Robinson, 1926). Once again, it is evidence of the interconnected nature of the exchange ideas and opinions between the cultural elite of London. I have undertaken all translations from French to English of correspondence between Chambers and others.

<sup>7</sup> William Chambers to Frederick Chapman, Master Builder to his Majesty the King of Sweden at Stockholm, 28 July 1771, BL Add MS Letter-books 41133, fol. 1.

<sup>8</sup> William Chambers to Senator C. F. Schuffer, 21 July 1773, BL Add MS Letter-books 41133, fol. 1. Bitterness about the earlier attacks against his work perhaps underlies his separate discussion of the nature of British politics and the constitution, as Chambers remarks in the same letter that 'furious politicians buzz and sting like wasps [...] these fiery combatants seldom use other weapons than words', going on to comment that every seven years during election time 'all is riot and confusion: tongues, pens, fists, whips, spits and every compulsive argument is in motion'.



Chambers then worked for the Swedish East India Company, with whom he travelled to China and was followed by a period of studying in France. His target audience, a mixture of professional builders, philosophers and writers, reveal doubleness in the text's intent: it is both instructional and philosophical, with deliberate literariness which sets it apart from traditional manuals of gardening and architecture, including his own *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (1757).

Richard Quaintance and David Porter have previously considered the *Dissertation and Explanatory Discourse* (1773) as an authentic attempt to describe a Chinese system of gardening. Quaintance focuses on the relative accuracy of the transliteration of the poetry in the footnotes; Porter considers Chambers's efforts as an example of attempted accommodation of the Chinese gardening aesthetic.<sup>9</sup> Quaintance observes 'as an effort, [it was] curiously hedged' but proposes that in impersonating 'a Chinese spokesman [Chambers] seeks to exploit the satiric vantage points of philosophic naivety and trenchant candor enjoyed by Goldsmith's observer Lien Chi Altangi in London a dozen years earlier'.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Porter notes that there is an 'ambivalence' in the treatise and dissertation, but concludes that Chambers is attempting a cross-cultural interaction through a fantasy of the Far-East in which 'Canton [...] evoked for Chambers something of the same 'startle reflex' that Greenblatt identifies in European culture'.<sup>11</sup>

It is, though, possible to identify an alternative reason for the noted ambivalence of the work, derived from studying Chambers's letters on the subject: when writing to the English master builder Frederick Chapman in Stockholm, Chambers

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<sup>9</sup> See Sir William Chambers, *An Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-Qua, of Quang-Chew-Fug gent* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1978), pp. 12-50, and David Porter, 'Cross-cultural aesthetics in William Chambers's Chinese Garden', *Chinese Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 37-54. Patrick Conner comes closest to describing the discourse accurately: he calls it 'a skilful blend of borrowings [...] imaginative infilling and – perhaps – Chambers's own experiences at Canton and its vicinity'. Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> Quaintance, 'Introduction', *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Porter, *Chinese Taste*, pp. 41, 50.

reveals his purpose for the disguise. Chambers declares that he was trying to spread not a Chinese but his own theory of gardening:

[His ideas had] met with a very favourable Reception here though it is in Direct opposition to the prevailing taste both in England and in the rest of Europe. It is *a System of my own* which as it was a bold attempt of which the success was very uncertain, I fathered upon the Chinese who I thought lived far enough off to be out of the reach of Critical abuse.<sup>12</sup>

This declaration re-casts the Explanatory discourse as wholly theatrical, a mantle of Chineseness whilst presenting nothing of Chinese gardens. There are no references in the text to pagodas or Chinese-style buildings, nor are there accounts of Chinese flora and fauna. None of the aesthetic markers referenced in his other works on the Chinese taste are included, nor is there any account of the detail of Chinese ideas of planting, despite the fact that Kew Gardens had been in receipt of Oriental plants for a number of years. Instead, there are only generic accounts of planting layout: ‘the splendor of our Oriental plantations’ (125); ‘accidental plantations’ (129); ‘gloomy plantations’ (132); ‘the addition of some planting, intermixed with ruins’ (133); ‘our children may see the perfection of what we plant’ (136); ‘rich in old planting’ (139).<sup>13</sup> A dragon and the mythical Imperial bird are mentioned once, but they are vehicles for allegory: they are used to describe the strength with which it is better to ‘fail in manly disputes [...] The towering spirit must attempt nobler flight [...] now thundering up the precipice [of human effort] with the tremendous dragon’s stride; now soaring to the top, stately

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<sup>12</sup> William Chambers to Frederick Chapman, Master Builder to his Majesty the King of Sweden at Stockholm, 28 July 1771, BL Add MS Letter-books 41135, fol. 3.

<sup>13</sup> In the main dissertation, some details are given on methods of planting, including a footnote that asserts:

‘Those who are acquainted with the natural history of China, know, that it produces almost all the plants and vegetables cultivated in Europe; with many others, that are not to be found even in our best hot houses: amongst which are several evergreens; as the Tse-song, of which the leaves resemble both the juniper and cypress, mixed in a very beautiful manner; the Mo-lyen, producing large flowers, like lillies, some yellow, some red, and some white, which open in December, and flourish during the greater part of the winter-, the La-mew, a kind of bay, producing fine yellow flowers, that appear in winter; with many others, which, as they cannot here be obtained, it is superfluous to enumerate’. *Dissertation*, p. 25.

and splendid as the imperial bird' (161). The images evoke a theatrical construction of exoticness.

In addition to ignoring the contents of Kew Gardens, Chambers made no reference to his own experiences as one of the English men who had travelled China. Instead, Chambers adopts what he describes variously as a 'mask' and 'disguise', the creation of which is facilitated by using the work of others who have been in China.

This is in contrast to his *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (1759), in which Chambers has based his work on 'the suburbs of a sea-port' which although 'cannot furnish the proper means for deciding the taste of a nation [...] we may reflect that Canton is one of the most considerable cities in Asia, and in many respects inferiour (sic) to none in China' (15). Chambers laments that he was not 'permitted to range over the whole empire [as] no doubt I could have swelled my work with more examples' (16). Furthermore, he values impressions from 'Chinese paintings' as his 'intention [is] only to give an idea of Chinese architecture, not designs of particular buildings' (15); Chambers resists replication and imitation in favour of influence and impression.

In *An Explanatory Discourse* (1773), Chambers omits his own experiences entirely, reinforcing the supposition that the eighteenth-century attitude to authenticity was nuanced and complicated. This attitude was informed by a preoccupation with origin and a tangible authenticity by being, or seeming to be, an actual Chinese from China rather than the tangential authenticity derived from being a non-Chinese visiting China. Still, the revelation by Chambers in the third edition in 1773 of his use of disguise is simultaneously playful and confessional, highlighting the problematic interaction between disguise and authenticity.

Chambers also presents Chet-quā as theatrically exotic, focusing on costume-like dress, rather than drawing on his own recollections of Chinese people. Tan Chet-quā 'wore nine whiskers and four long nails, with silk boots, callico-breeches' yet though he had 'three wives' (115) he was 'for a heathen, a very compleat gentleman': he 'composed [...] billet-doux [...] played divinely upon the bag-pipe,

and made excellent remarks [...] [and] was fond of smoaking (sic)' (116).  
Exoticism and familiarity reside in one body.

Chambers had certainly met the real Tan Chet-quā, who, as a porcelain modeller, was invited to display a bust at the 1770 Royal Academy exhibition and had sculpted such luminaries as David Garrick.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Chambers and Chet-quā both appear in the portrait by Johan Zoffany of the Royal Academicians (1770), with Chet-Quā identifiable on the left hand side at the back wearing a traditional Chinese conical hat.<sup>15</sup> Chambers's presentation of Chet-quā in European calico breeches and silk boots rather than fully exotic costume suggests that the guise was supposed to be muted. It contrasts with the description given of the real Tan Chet-Quā in a letter from Mr R. Gough to Rev. B Forster, dated August 3rd, 1770. In the letter, Gough remarks:

His complexion is different from any eastern I ever saw, with more yellow in it than the Negroes or Moors; his upper lips covered with thin hair an inch long, and very strong and black; on his head no hair except the long lock braided into a tail almost a yard long; his lips prominent, nose long, eyes not very lively, nails as long as one sees of those of our sedentary mechanics. He wears the dress of his own country, a pointed stiff cap, with a border turned up of quilted silk, an under vest like a banian of green silk, with a lining; his upper vest a kind of mantelet; his drawers the same as his under vest; and his slippers yellow.<sup>16</sup>

Gough gives greater emphasis than Chambers to racial difference and evokes the manner in which new species of animal were described in academic journals such as the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, with no emphasis on

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<sup>14</sup> A Chinese painted clay figure of David Garrick by Tan Chet or Chit qua was sold as lot 175 in sale 7306 at Christies on 10 May 2006, realising £72 000. *A Chinese painted Clay Figure of Garick*, 10 May 2006, London: Christie's, Lot 175 [sale catalogue].

<sup>15</sup> See appendix (p. 323).

<sup>16</sup> J. B. Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century: Consisting of authentic memoirs and original letters of eminent persons; and intended as a sequel to the Literary anecdotes*, 6 vols (London: Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1828), V, p. 318.

personality, character or habits. It suggests that, in adopting a Chinese mantle, taking on an alternative skin colour to the masquerader's own was a step too far, whereas referencing a theatrical costume, describing clothes and hair, in the creation of the mask was the limit of acceptable performance.

The real Tan Chet-Qua's biography and unfortunate attempt to return to China is recorded in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1771): he was sailing for China when a storm struck his ship and the superstitious sailors blamed the foreigner; he was dumped back on British shores, where his inability to communicate hindered his return to London. Eventually, a kindly passer-by took pity on him and escorted him to London, whereupon the crowds thought he was being kidnapped by the man who had assisted him.<sup>17</sup> The language barrier was blamed for the entirety of Chet-Qua's misfortune. Chambers refers to this story in his *Explanatory Discourse*, as the fake Tan Chet-Qua recalls with horror:

I have seen at least twenty of their boisterous pranks; in which, not to enumerate the broken windows, the bloody noses, the kicks, and the bastinadoes of other gentlemen, I have myself been a melancholy sufferer upon various occasions; particularly at Portsmouth, where I was thrown into the sea, and narrowly escaped drowning, for the diversion of the company. Would to Heaven!—as I say to the mistresses Chet-qua in a morning—would to Heaven, my ducks, we were well at Quang-chew-fu again, with all our long nails, and all our whiskers about us! The rigours of an Emperor are less frightful to me, than the frolics of a savage mob, elevated to madness with songs of freedom, and tons of strong beer: it is easier to please a man with one good head, than a monster with ten thousand, all bad ones.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 41 (1771): 237-238. See also John Bowyer Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century: Consisting of authentic memoirs and original letters of eminent persons; and intended as a sequel to the Literary anecdotes*, 6 vols (London: Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1828), V, pp. 318-319.

<sup>18</sup> William Chambers, *An Explanatory Discourse*, p. 130.

The narrative acts as a marker of authenticity, relating an aspect of Tan Chet-Qua's true biography, yet it is a ridiculous performance of truth that has a clear underlying purpose to criticise British, and particularly London, society: if such an absurd character can see with such clarity, then others, who are less absurd, should also recognise the dangers. This curious criticism of mob-rule appears to refer to the uprisings in Spitalfield by 'riotous weavers' which recurred between 1765 and 1769.<sup>19</sup>

It is an odd, self-declared 'digression, which the terrors of a disturbed imagination have drawn me into; and permit your servant to re-assume the thread of his Discourse' (131). It is also the one point at which the masquerade becomes an absurd costume, and the ventriloquised voice fails: Tan Chet-Qua sounds like a querulous old woman from the lower ranks of society.

Chambers presents Chet-qua as somnolent: 'often disserting [on gardening] till he was tired, and the audience fast asleep; for the tone of his voice was like opium to the hearers; his method was diffuse and the subject, though a good one, not generally interesting'.<sup>20</sup> The distinction between Oriental product, opium, and the Oriental man, is blurred, and the lethargy it imposes could be an effort to neutralise the potential threat of the Chinese man. Yet, it appears rather to be an apologia for the text and subject matter, as it is the topic of Oriental gardens that is 'good' yet dull, adopting a popular trope of the Chinese as uninteresting and uninterested people.<sup>21</sup> Chambers's admission of disguise also includes an apologia for the subject matter, stating, in the third edition:

The Author [...] is more ambitious of being useful than entertaining, humbly begs leave to offer at the end of this second edition, such reasons and explanations as seem necessary, either to

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<sup>19</sup> For an account of the riots, see *The Annual Register* (1769), pp. 81, 124, 136, 138. See also John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England: 1700-1832* (Harlow: Addison-Wesley Longman Limited, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, ed. by Quaintance, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Goldsmith's declaration that 'The Chinese are often dull, and so is he', Goldsmith, Preface, *Citizen*, xiv. See also David Porter, 'A Peculiar but Uninteresting Nation: China and the Discourse of Commerce in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 33.2 (Winter, 2000): 181-199.

remove doubts or clear obscurities [...] Of these illustrations he saw necessity some time ago, and framed them into a Discourse supposed to be pronounced by Chet-qua, then in England; judging it, at that time, a sort of propriety *to put in the mouth of a Chinese*, what farther information was wanted relative to his country. But as there is now no longer any necessity for disguise, both the Dissertation and Explanatory Discourse ought certainly to appear in their *natural dress*. To new-model them, however, would require more time than the Author can possibly spare; he therefore has republished the Dissertation, in its original form, and the Discourse as it was originally written; hoping the indulgent reader will pardon these defects, and gather the fruit, if there be any to gather, without minding the trees on which it grows.<sup>22</sup>

Authenticity is pretended by the adoption of a Chinese mantle, a disguise that is a ventriloquisation and a dressing up. This is reinforced by the use of ‘real’ Chinese poetry fragments and strengthened by a display of knowledge by the counterfeit author-translator, who is really Chambers dressing up as Chinese, in supposedly explanatory and expanding footnotes.

One footnote includes the ‘translation’ and comment upon a Chinese Imperial poem ‘In Praise of Moukden’, translated and published by the French Jesuit resident in China, Pere Amiot. The ‘Explanatory Discourse’ begins with a transliterated epigram ‘Tan lou ty tchan yue / Ko ou, pou choue. / Ou Yun king tai pan / Fou fou teous lo ty’. The footnote declares that the translation is derived from the French version as the ‘Editor found it easier [...] than [translating] from the Chinese original’.<sup>23</sup>

Chambers’s use of the explanatory footnote dresses the text as an authentic academic treatise and, at the same time, highlights its function as a satirical text.

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<sup>22</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, pp. 113-14; my italics.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

During the eighteenth century, scholarly and satiric texts employed the footnote: the former reveals connections to an associated piece of knowledge and refers the reader to alternative sources of related information; the latter generates humour through revealed absurdity or mock interest. In a comic footnote, an omniscient narrator adds a revealing detail that usually serves to highlight the parodic nature of the scene or to emphasise the links between the world in the text and the real world by showing a universal truth or truism, particularly about human nature or attitudes.<sup>24</sup>

The issue of truth and authenticity emerges in the original source text, Jean Joseph Marie Amiot's edition of *Eloge de la ville de Moukden et de ses environs* (1770).<sup>25</sup> The original text by Amiot contains a foreword that worries:

Although I am convinced that those who read this poem, will not take it as one of those Works made in Paris, and which are advertised as translated from Arabic, from Tartare, from the Indian language, & c. I thought that it was necessary to prevent any mistake about it and to establish its authenticity, and render an account of the manner by which it is acquired in France.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Pope invited Swift to add some of his own notes to the *Variorum*, writing that these might take a variety of forms, 'whether dry raillery, upon the style and way of commenting on trivial critics; or humorous, upon the authors in the poem; or historical, of persons, places, times; or explanatory; or collecting the parallel passages of the ancients', quoted in Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> Amiot's publication was generally well received. As the *Monthly Review* in 1770 concludes: 'Moukden, the subject of the Emperor's panegyric, was the place of his nativity, and he has thence taken occasion, to celebrate his ancestors. That maxim of Chinese morality, which teaches the son to look, with so much veneration, towards his parents, he inculcates with great care. The face of the country, where he went to visit the tombs of his progenitors, he has no less beautifully described, than those natural productions for which it was remarkable. In the pictures which he has drawn of his ancestors, we perceive those virtues which should distinguish royalty: in what he has said of the natural history of China, he has instructed us on a subject which is little known; and we are struck with the elegant arrangement of his piece'. *Monthly Review*, 42 (London: R. Griffiths, 1770): 501-51.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Amiot, 'Advertisement', *Eloge de la ville de Moukden et de ses environs* (Paris: N. M. Tilliard, 1770), pp. i-ii.



Amiot is concerned about traceable origins, as well as asserting the text's authenticity in the face of Parisian authors falsely professing to producing translations of Oriental texts; an ironic anxiety, considering the extent to which Amiot's work is played with by Chambers and subsequently Pindar. Amiot's foreword continues by noting that a shipment of French Jesuit writings included 'a box which contained many very curious books'. The description evokes a Pandora's box or treasure trove of possibilities, and these curious books included:

The original Chinese Tartar Poem of the Emperor Kien-Long [...] with the translation made by the same P. Amiot: but difficulties occurred in Guangzhou Customs with these books, because the Chinese do not want foreigners to learn about their language or their literature; these difficulties, I say, prevented the cases arriving before this year.<sup>27</sup>

This history utilises knowledge of Chinese culture as a marker of authenticity, while also implying the work's commodification in its inclusion in a case of curious things. Furthermore, it defends the text against accusations of falsehood by declaring that the gap between its composition by the Emperor and its transmission to France was due to export restrictions imposed by the Chinese. The expression of Chinese discomfort with the implied liberties that may be taken if foreigners access their work proves prescient in the light of the extent to which the Imperial poem is played with by the British.

With regards to Chambers's use of transliteration, as Richard Quaintance observes, from a linguistic perspective, 'if allowances are made for the persistent difficulty of transcribing Chinese phonemes, and for Chambers's dependence upon Cantonese rather than Mandarin dialect, the oriental dress of the Discourse is less bogus than might be assumed'.<sup>28</sup> A doubleness exists in the text: on the one hand, the costume of Tan Chet-Qua is de-exoticised from the real man's true preferred clothing as he is

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<sup>27</sup> 'Advertisement', pp. iii-iv.

<sup>28</sup> Quaintance, 'Introduction', p. 11.

dressed by Chambers in a semi-European outfit; on the other, there are signifiers of Chineseness in transliterated phonemes, which re-create the effect of an Imperial poem, the lines of which are used in the European manner of an enlightening classical epigram.

Chambers's footnote adopts a similar preoccupation with authenticity and accuracy, stating:

There is no doubt but [the transliterated Chinese poem] is perfectly correct. Here follows the exact copy of it, with an English translation, for the entertainment and instruction of the curious in poetry. There is a French translation of the same work, by Father Amiot, published at Paris, in 1770, from which the present Publication is in a great measure taken; the Editor having found it easier to translate from the French copy, than from the Chinese original.<sup>29</sup>

Tension in these words derives from the declared emphasis on exactitude and perfect correctness and yet the translator, apparently unable to work from the Chinese, is working only 'in great measure' from the French. It highlights the problematic relationship between truthful translations and the translator's authorial independence and an unwillingness to take too much from the French version.

The 'exact' copy is a romanised transliteration of the text, done by Europeans for the benefit of Europeans. In the process of transliteration, the text has become dislocated, aiding the European conception of the Imperial poem as a textual rather than visual or pictorial experience. In itself, this proves disingenuous and demonstrates the altered state of the translated text, as the Emperor Qian Long had a strong sense of his poetry as serving an aesthetic purpose.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, ed. by Quaintance, p. 118.

<sup>30</sup> For further discussion of Imperial poetry and the Emperor's vision of antiquity and modernity as interrelated, see Yu Peichin, 'Consummate Images: Emperor Qianlong's Vision of the 'Ideal' Kiln, *Orientations*, 42.8 (November/December 2011): 80-88. Significantly, the inability during the Qing dynasty of the Chinese to reproduce the methods of porcelain production of the Song dynasty resulted in a concomitant level of anxiety as felt by early eighteenth-century Europeans in their attempts to replicate

In this way, the poem in Chambers's footnote is multiply dislocated: it has been removed from its country of origin; it is greatly distanced from its original aesthetic form; and the authentic poem has become an inauthentic marker of Chineseness in the context of Chambers's masquerade.

### **'Supernatural Gardening': Chambers's Philosophy of Gardening**

In his essay 'Of the Art of laying out Gardens among the Chinese', Chambers asserts:

The art of laying out grounds, after the Chinese manner, is exceedingly difficult, and not to be attained by persons of narrow intellects. For though the precepts are simple and obvious, yet the putting them in execution requires genius, judgment, and experience; a strong imagination, and a thorough knowledge of the human mind.<sup>31</sup>

In elevating gardening to requiring a philosophical attitude, this list of necessary qualities suggests that the adoption of the mantle of Tan Chet-Qua by Chambers serves as a test of the reader's and as evidence of the author's imaginative capabilities.

The lexis of the *Explanatory Discourse* is, at times, quasi-religious, as Chambers refers to 'those who are better acquainted with the East, know that nothing is too great for eastern magnificence to attempt; and there can be few impossibility,

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superior Chinese porcelain. Like the European technological advances during the unsuccessful efforts to replicate Chinese porcelain that resulted in novel European porcelain compounds, the Chinese of the Qing period ultimately enjoyed innovation in porcelain production during their failed attempts to reproduce those used during the Song era.

<sup>31</sup>*Magazine of Magazines: Compiled from Original Pieces, with Extracts from the Most Celebrated Books, and Periodical Compositions, Published in Europe[...] The Whole Forming a Complete Literary and Historical Account of that Period*, 13 (1757): 392-395 (p. 395). Chambers refers to that 'which I saw in China', a confirmation of Chambers's authority by physical presence in and authentic looking at China and the Chinese taste; such a declaration never appears in the *Discourse* and *Explanatory Notes* fifteen years later. *Magazine*, p. 392.

where treasures are inexhaustible, where power is unlimited, and where munificence has no bounds'.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, he capitalises 'Garden'; the garden is Edenic, and here brings together the excellence of nature and the ability of man, becoming a literal and metaphorical setting for the advancement of the mind.<sup>33</sup>

Chambers evidently thought it was also worth sending Voltaire a copy of his thoughts on gardening, as he was a renowned Sinophile who advocated the study of Chinese philosophical thought in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764).<sup>34</sup> Although critical of China's lack of scientific advancement, Voltaire admired Confucian thought and promoted an interest in China's academic achievements.<sup>35</sup>

Chambers wrote to Voltaire:

I take the liberty of sending you a little book lately published by me; it contains besides a great deal of nonsense two very pretty prints [...] The taste of gardening [...] is very indifferent all over Europe: a wish to see it mended has induced me to throw out a few hints upon the subject; hopeful that they might excite others to labour in the same field; so ample, so rich, so well deserving the attention of genius, its much to be regreted [sic] that Monsieur de Voltaire [...] has never employed his thoughts upon it.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> For further discussions on Chinese gardens as an Edenic influence on English gardening practice, see Yu Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden: Chinese Gardening Ideas and a New English Aesthetic Ideal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, trans. and ed. by Peter Gay (New York: Basic Books, 1962), I.

<sup>35</sup> See Paul Bailey, 'Voltaire and Confucius: French Attitudes towards China in the Early Twentieth Century', *History of European Ideas*, 14.6 (1992): 817-837 and Marie-Julie Frainais-Maitre, 'Réception et Représentation de la Philosophie Chinoise en France du 16<sup>e</sup> au 21<sup>e</sup> siècle [Reception and Representation of Chinese Philosophy in France 16th - 21st centuries]', *Cahiers Voltaire*, 9 (2010): 247-253.

<sup>36</sup> William Chambers to M. de Voltaire, 3 July 1772, BL Add MS Letter-books 41134 fol. 2.

The letter suggests that Chambers has begun to regard the art of gardening as requiring the attention of philosophical thought.

The seemingly self-deprecating and modest reply from the elderly Voltaire is an exposition on the quotidian and bodily nature of gardening; Voltaire is perhaps suspicious of uniting higher thought and base activity. He suggests that one requires: *des yeux pour les regarder, et des Jambres [sic] pour j'y promener* [eyes for looking at it and legs for walking around it], both of which Voltaire has *'perdu bien'* [lost completely] due to *'vieillesse et à [ses] maladies'* [age and his illnesses].<sup>37</sup> Although Voltaire states that he follows the precepts presented by Chambers, he adds that he only follows them as far as *'mon ignorance et ma fortune me l'ont permis'*.<sup>38</sup>

Chambers's other, more intimate connections in France, forged during his years studying in Paris, ensured that the cool response from Voltaire did not halt the text's progress in the country. In Julien-David Le Roy's letter to Chambers, he identifies a poetic manner and elegance in the Dissertation, which, having read it, he declares:

I am assured that Friendship has not made an illusion; that having been read by the celebrated Madame du Bocage, and many gentlemen of letters, that they are of the same opinion of it as me. Madame du Bocage in particular has appeared to me quite enchanted that I have taken the liberty of offering her an example on your part, that she has instructed me to give you a thousand compliments.<sup>39</sup>

The exchange reveals the secondary purpose of circulation: it is not just a method of transmission of ideas and to generate sales, but also confirms and affirms the ideas themselves by creating a system of neutral validation through feedback.

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<sup>37</sup> Voltaire to Chambers, 7 August 1772, BL Add MS Letter-books 41134 fol. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Voltaire's dismissal may also be patriotic, as Chambers's *Explanatory Discourse* is rather critical of the French gardening aesthetic as too unnatural and lacking in imagination.

<sup>39</sup> Julien-David Le Roy to William Chambers, 24 October 1772, BL Add MS Letter-books 41134 fol. 2.

If Le Roy is too partial due to his amity and affection for Chambers, then the celebrated Boccage was a key ally and validator of the work. A poet, dramatist and writer and friend of Voltaire, who described her as ‘the Sappho of Normandy’, Boccage was the first woman to receive a prize from the Academy of Rouen and was an arbiter of taste and ideas in the heart of cosmopolitan France. Le Roy’s efforts seemed to bear fruition as, on 14th May 1773, Chambers wrote to Le Roy to give an account of the reception of his *Dissertation* and his Chinese buildings and the gardens at Kew, which had reached a third edition, and to inform that he is sending ‘100 discourses of Chetqua and 100 copies of my book on gardening’, a small indication of the positive reception in Paris of his ideas on gardening.<sup>40</sup>

Le Roy replied, ‘Your book is extremely interesting to me, both on account of the large number of new ideas it contains, and for the poetic manner in which it is expressed’. He also wrote on 15 July 1773 that ‘Your reply to Tan Chet-Qua, which I read with great eagerness, seemed to me quite ingenious. The portrait you draw of this man is very agreeable, and I found parts in his discourse that were quite poetic and the comparisons sublime’.<sup>41</sup> When writing directly to Chambers, Le Roy’s reference to ‘his [Tan Chet-Qua’s] discourse’, rather than the expected *your discourse*, which reveals an apparent belief in the authenticity of the Chinese writer. Yet in complimenting the poetic, the sublime and the portrait-drawing, he identifies the artificial creation of the character: it seems that Le Roy was maintaining the ‘voice’ of Tan Chet-Qua whilst complimenting its creator.

Le Roy’s assertion of the text’s ingenuity extends the disguise beyond the simple and obvious; he is also perhaps trying to demonstrate that his intellect is equally broad and encompassing. Chambers’s use of humour in the creation of a philosophy of imagination is complementary rather than oppositional. The repeated reference in Chambers’s text to the journey of the eye and the body refers to the psychological transport of beauty and creativity, the pathway to

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<sup>40</sup> William Chambers to Julien-David Le Roy, 14 May 1773, BL Add MS Letter-books 41134 fol. 2.,

<sup>41</sup> Julien-David Le Roy to William Chambers, 15 July 1773, BL Add MS Letter-books 41134 fol. 2.

development of the mind, inspired by different sights and experiences, which have been relocated in that place of fantasy and imagination, China.

This, then, is why Le Roy refers to the sublimity of the text: it is a discourse on beauty, the imagination and the development of the artistic psyche disguised as a treatise on gardening; or, in order to advance gardening as an artistic form, it is a treatise on gardening disguised as a discourse on beauty and the imagination. It can be both at the same time, owing to the double nature of dressing up and masquerade, which necessitates being two things in one body.

Chambers advances his thesis by presenting gardening as a method of exploring ideas that can be recognised as gothic or proto-Romantic, with an explication of the sensory and psychological impact of the natural and supernatural. He connects these ideas with Enlightenment epistemologies of knowledge, however, in his proposal for viewing his ideas as ‘philosophical experiments’, highlighting an intellectual intent behind the playfulness of the text.

The principal parts of this *supernatural Gardening* consists in a display of many surprizing phenomena, and extraordinary effects, produced by air, fire, water, motion, light, and gravitation, they may be considered as *a collection of philosophical experiments*, exhibited in a better manner, upon a larger scale, and more forcibly than is common: in that light they think, even men of sense may venture to look at them, without impeachment of their understanding; to admire what is ingenious, new or extraordinary; and stare at what they do not comprehend.<sup>42</sup>

The choice of ‘supernatural’ reveals doubleness: the supernatural should be distinct from the natural; it should separate divine from earthly and the godly or magical from the rational. ‘Supernatural’ taps into the seeming illimitability of natural philosophy and the scientific exploration of earthly elements of nature as part of understanding divinity at work and reinforces the synonymy, or mirroring,

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<sup>42</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 160; my italics.

of domestic gardening with the Edenic Garden. It represents the liminal point between abstraction and legibility.<sup>43</sup>

In the same way, adopting a Chinese mantle creates the border between the abstracted persona and the legible content beneath the mantle. Significantly, the word ‘artificial’<sup>44</sup> is employed ten times during the text in the consideration of the challenges of balancing improving nature against overly stylised artificiality. For this reason, the ‘European artificial manner appears not [to Tan Chet-Qua] perfect’, yet British connoisseurs ‘will [...] object to [Chinese] artificial scenery; which they consider as unnatural’.<sup>45</sup>

Chambers recognised the mixed response to his ideas and text. He wrote to Lord Grantham, the British Ambassador to Spain, in response to a request for books on architecture:

I had prepared a copy of my little book on gardening[...] for your Lordship's perusal: but the Claps and Hisses were for some time so equal that I grew ashamed of the present and threw it by. The book having, however, in less than a year, been damned through two English Editions and applauded through one in French, and while furiously abused by some connoisseurs of the age, it has been as furiously defended by others; I venture to send you a copy naturally concluding that there must be some little merit in a thing which has caused such a bustle.<sup>46</sup>

The reference to the stage reveals Chambers's acknowledgement of the text as a performance and as subject to a very public gaze. Lord Grantham replied:

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<sup>43</sup> In a discussion of Millais's painting *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (1850), Paul Barlow proposes the idea of the ‘point between abstraction and legibility’ as the vivid green hues conveys ‘nature [seeming] to generate the supernatural’. Paul Barlow, *Time Present And Time Past: The Art Of John Everett Millais* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2005), p. 104.

<sup>44</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, pp. 120, 124, 132, 135, 145, 146, 148, 154.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>46</sup> William Chambers to Thomas Robinson, Lord Grantham, 17 August 1773, BL Add MS Letter-books 41135 fol. 3.



I have read the dissertation with much pleasure. I agree with you in many of your Positions tho I do not quite follow you in all. The supposed attack upon Mr Brown has drawn upon you much of the Pleasantry and the Ribaldry has been thrown out against it, besides which your appearance in the Chinese dress, attracted more notice than a plainer habit would have done.<sup>47</sup>

Once more, the reference to theatricality points to the dangers of the spotlight created by textual masquerade.

Chambers responded on 26 April 1774:

It gives me great pleasure to have your Lordship's approbation of those little works upon the whole; to expect you should relish every part were unreasonable, as the daubing in many places is tawdrey (sic) and not designed for nice Judges, but calculated to please la Canaille; a numerous body in every Country, which in projects of a General nature must not be neglected.<sup>48</sup>

There is an ironic tension between this letter and Chambers's ventriloquised criticism of English-designed gaudiness in which 'the gaudy trifling confused plantations with which all your English-made Gardens are so crowded'.<sup>49</sup>

The mantle of Chineseness can be variously and simultaneously, 'tawdrey' and used to delight the vulgar as well as being regarded as 'ingenious', 'poetic' and 'sublime': rather like the doubleness of the Chinese aesthetic itself. The *Explanatory Discourse* argues:

[A]t a treat, there should be meats for every palate; in a shop of general resort, goods for every fancy; in a Garden, designed for

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Lord Grantham to Chambers, 16 December 1773.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Chambers to Lord Grantham, 26 April 1774.

<sup>49</sup> Chambers, *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 130.

publick inspection, exhibitions of every kind; that all may find something to their liking, and none go away disappointed or dissatisfied: and, as at a feast, men eat of what they best relish, without mumbling the rest of the dishes, but leave them untainted for others to feed upon, so, in a Garden, if a man be too wise to laugh, or be pleased with trifles, he may pass them over unnoticed: amongst the multitude there are many fancies to gratify; children, old women, eunuchs, and pleasure-misses, ought to be diverted, as well as sages, mandarins (sic), or connoisseurs. It is not every one, say they, that enjoys the force or fierceness of grand compositions; to some they are even terrifying: weak minds delight in little objects, which are easiest adapted to their confined comprehensions; as children are better pleased with a puppet-show, than with more serious or noble performance.<sup>50</sup>

In this, then, the Chinese mantle provides the same as the gardening philosophy demands: something for everyone, to be enjoyed at a level suited to their status; it also, from a position of intellectual snobbery, presents a method of distinguishing between people and their abilities. In a text that advocates subtle artifice in gardening and disguising the artificial as natural, as well as creating textures and layers in a garden, the artifice of the device serves well.

The *Discourse* operates under the dual influences of the sublime and the picturesque, which could work together in harmony and opposition to produce a range of sensations in the observer:

England abounds with commons and wilds, dreary, barren, and serving only to give an uncultivated appearance to the country, particularly near the metropolis: to beautify these vast tracts of land, is next to an impossibility; but they may easily be framed into scenes of terror, converted into noble pictures of the sublimest cast, and, by

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

an artful contrast, serve to enforce the effect of gayer and more luxuriant prospects.<sup>51</sup>

The emphasis on the relationship between art and artfulness is significant, as Tan Chet-Qua declares:

We [Chinese] consider how [Nature] may be employed [...] to most advantage; and do not always introduce her in the same garb; but show her in a variety of forms; sometimes naked, as you attempt to do; sometimes disguised; sometimes decorated, or assisted by art; scrupulously avoiding, in our most artless dispositions, all resemblance to the common face of the country, with which the Garden is immediately surrounded; being convinced, that a removal from one field to another, of the same appearance, can never afford any particular pleasure, nor ever excite powerful sensations of any kind.<sup>52</sup>

This too reveals the doubleness of the text, as the disguise as Tan Chet-Qua, the sculptor, avoids adopting a common face: the whole text is decorated and assisted by the artful dressing-up as Chinese; artful also implies trickery or clever deceit as well as being characterised by skillfulness. The use of Tan Chet-Qua provides the defence of the precept of the text; the disguise models a philosophy of gardening which emphasises variety and decoration to stimulate the viewer. The perceptive Reverend Archdeacon Robert Clive, in his letter to Chambers continues in his critique of the *Dissertation and Explanatory Discourse*:

The language is elevated, well adapted to the subject, & conveys your ideas in the clearest manner to every attentive reader - I have the pleasure of thinking that your Dissertation is not only defensible but that it is well defended by Chitqua. Certainly it was no proper subject of ridicule, nor can your book be answered on the Credit it has by an person, unless he is able to contradict the facts therein

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-145.

stated and the Idea I have of your Integrity from the long acquaintance I have had with you, will not allow me to think that Possible [...]. I think Mr Brown should rather thank you for your publication, than be offended, for he certainly may collect from your book many fine Ideas, which may be useful to him in his way if he is not above borrowing from one that he may look upon as his rival [...] If he will not allow him to be his superior in the art of Gardening.<sup>53</sup>

A syntactical relative to authenticity, integrity has the double meaning of being whole, entire and undiminished as well as being of sound moral character, whilst authenticity connotes genuineness, of not being fake or faked. The use of Chetqua's voice has not diminished the integrity of the work or ideas in the mind of Clive; rather, the quality of the work and the mastery of the subject by the author has shone through.

Nevertheless, some readers were fooled by the disguise. On 24 March 1773, J. Leake wrote to Chambers asking for his permission to print a defensive tract against William Mason's *An Heroick Epistle to Sir William Chambers* [...] *Author of a late Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1773). The satirical poem attacks Chambers on the basis that the architect was declaring 'European artists must not hope to rival Oriental splendour'. In the preface, Mason announced in words laden with irony that Chambers had:

The [...] profest aim in extolling the taste of the Chinese, to condemn that mean and paltry manner which Kent introduced, which Southcote, Hamilton and Brown allowed, and which, to our national disgrace, is called the English style of gardening [...] In short, such art is displayed in the Emperor's garden of Yuen-Ming-Yuen; where fine lizards, and fine women, human giants and giant baboons, make but a small part of the superb scenery.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Reverend Archdeacon Robert Clive to William Chambers, 28 March 1774, BL Add MS Letter-books 41135 fol. 3.

<sup>54</sup> William Mason, *An Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers: Knight, Enriched with Explanatory Notes* (London: J. Almon, 1773), p. 3.

Mason fails to note the irony latent in Chambers's satirical adoption of a Chinese mantle: the *Explanatory Discourse* reveals, through the adoption of an easily penetrated disguise, the fact that the English could be the masters of creative thought and imagination. Instead, Mason cast incorrectly Chambers's view as one of subservience to the artistic might of the Orient, which Mason presents as horrific and grotesque.<sup>55</sup>

On the same day that Leake wrote asking for permission to rebut Mason's poem, Chambers replies with a serious note of urgency:

I must entreat you not to make [the lines] publick [...] chiefly, because they would keep up the ball longer. The poem alluded to will drop of itself; it is only the wonder of a day; and has nothing to recommend it but a little temporary humour, with much abuse of the ministry and many other ingenious men [...] Tis true there are some scoundrels among us; but these are only there by way of contrast; to set the true men in a better light [...] David Hume, and several others, are much more roughly handled than I am, particularly Charles Fox [...] the Poet is rather sparing of me, in so much that an ingenious friend believed I had bribed him to talk: and it is observable that the great torrent of his wit is aimed at what does not belong to me; that is, Peking in miniature, taken from Father Attiret's account of the Yuen Ming. With regard to the Parrots, Monkeys, Whores and Cats, they are all fair game; the Poet may shoot at them or eat them if he pleases [...]. One thing is certain; his nonsense makes mine circulate; this first Epistle has sold a large

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<sup>55</sup> In the 1825 edition of *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*, the following additional detail in the footnote is given to the subheading on Chinese Gardening: 'His account of the Chinese gardening was collected from his own observations in China, *from conversations with Chinese artists*, and communications from different travellers' (my italics), mistaking the fiction of the masquerade for factual source. Sir William Chambers, 'Preface', *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*, Eds. Joseph Gwilt, Thomas Hardwick, 2 vols (London: Priestly and Weale, 1825), I, p. xv.

quantity of my dissertations, and I think a second, equally seasoned with abuse and wit, would sell the whole second Edition.<sup>56</sup>

Chambers compares his position to that of political philosophers and politicians, demonstrating the fact that he believed his work to be contributing to the philosophy of thought. He is also aware of the commercial benefit as well as the toleration of satirical expositions of the elite at the hands of the public. Privately, though, Chambers was sensitive to the abuse. On 18th September 1773, Chambers wrote to Le Roy:

You will find many singular ideas and in general a system which if it resembles a little what you have adopted in Europe, I dare not admit it; it must be better than the fury of the critiques that have been unleashed against the Chinese, and against me, who has not the time to respond to them.<sup>57</sup>

Nearly a year after Leake's original letter, on 19 March 1774, Chambers was again frustrated that Leake had brought his work to attention, as he opines:

[The Epistle] was only the wonder of a day and seems to have been almost forgot these ten months. I should be still more sorry [...] to see the poem you sent me, in open day light as it is a worse compliment to the King that even the Heroick Epistle, or any other abusive publication [...] The Heroick writer has fairly knockt himself down by his silly postscript [...] There may [...] be found many more effective ways of serving his friend than by the publication of an indifferent Poem [...] Authors, and especially Poets, are often too fond of their own predictions to follow good advice, it may therefore by difficult to dissuade the Songster [...] but at any rate let me Entreat you not to publish or print it at Griffins, as it might then be Imagined I had a finger in the Pie.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Chambers to Leake, 24 March 1773, BL Add MS 41135 fol. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Chambers to Le Roy, 18 September 1773, BL Add MS 41135 fol. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Chambers to Leake, 19 March 1774, BL Add MS 41135 fol. 3.

Leake replies:

I certainly should suppress the Poem I sent you were it in my choice  
[...] I could not avail myself of it to obtain the consent of my friend  
to keep it from the press, it shall not go to Griffin. tho your delicacy  
on that head is very great, as your name is not mentioned in the  
poem, the Writer can hardly be considered as your friend.<sup>59</sup>

The exchange demonstrates the power of the public arena to make or break authors; here, Leake values profit above the subject's wishes, highlighting the vulnerability of the public figure to unscrupulous acquaintances.

Chambers also received a letter from Oliver Goldsmith in April 1773 telling Chambers of Burke's suggestion that Goldsmith also wrote a poetical response:

You have read no doubt a poem with some share of humour  
supposed to be written by Mr Ansty against you, whoever the  
Author is, he is perceived a steady Brownist [...] Most of the  
companies I now go into divide themselves into two parties the  
Chamberists and Brownists, but depend upon it you'll in the end  
have the Victory, because you have truth and nature on your side.  
Mr Burke was advising me about four days ago to draw my pen in a  
poem in defense of your system, and sincerely I am very much  
warm'd in the Case. If I write it I will point my name to it boldly.<sup>60</sup>

The military lexis evokes the sparring nature of the intellectual arena and the way in which satire is used as a cultural and intellectual weapon. The cultural conflict has been stoked by Chambers's reference in his discourse to competing gardening

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> In the same letter, Goldsmith declares that 'Sir Joshua Reynolds is a profess't Chamberist. He always speaks of your system with respect'. Goldsmith also offers Chambers's wife and daughters tickets to *She Stoops to Conquer*, to which Chambers replies that they 'thank you for your kind invitation, but they have seen your play twice, and laughed so immoderately both times that they dare not venture upon a third, for fear of hystericks'.

practices of Italy, France, and the most heavily condemned, of Holland, along with the supposed Chinese aspects. Aesthetics was an alternative arena to war for competing nations; likewise, Goldsmith uses the allegory of duelling to convey the verbal and textual sparring that was a cultural equivalent of the old duels.<sup>61</sup>

To this, Chambers replies:

What you tell me of Burke surprises me for I imagined him upon the whole rather averse to my system, nor [...] from any thing he had said, but from what he had not said [...] the publick will gain by the acquisition another good Poem, and I shall be honoured by having so eminent a defender, but for my book I shall not guard about it myself, nor do I wish any friend of mine should take that trouble. The poem you mention [...] I have heard it father'd on H Walpole, has a great deal of humour, and will no doubt carry the laugh against me; but it is a kind of humour that cannot last, being like that of some plays when you must see the actors before you can find the jokes. For the rest, the author whoever he is, has put me in excellent Company, and though his poem is addressed to me, yet he has, like a man of true breeding, taken most notice of my betters; the K\_\_\_\_ [king], Lord Talbot, Lord Sandwich, and several other worthy lords and learned Doctors figure much more in this piece than Sir William. The thing is written by a masterly hand; and so artfully seasoned with polticks and abuse, that it cannot fail to have a great run; yet, in points of real Criticism, it appears to me Very trifling in Short; not with an answer; I shall give myself no trouble about it, nor would I have you. Employ your pen my dear Doctor on better subjects; and leave my little book to fall or Stand by its own Strength.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that duels did not occur: for example, Peter Pindar was involved in a rather feeble sword-duel in his old age; but words were beginning to outstrip violence.

<sup>62</sup> Horace Walpole to William Mason, 26 May 1773, BL Add MS 41135, fol. 3. Chambers's concern about Burke's reaction was probably due to the fact that *Of the Art of Laying out Gardens* (1757) was reprinted in the *Annual Register* (London: Dodsley, 1758); in that volume, Edmund Burke regarded the essay as 'much the best that has been



This lengthy letter articulates Chambers's intellectual snobbery: he hopes someone of note has written the anonymous pamphlet. It also reveals his anxiety, as Walpole actively despised Chambers: Walpole colluded with Mason in the production of the epistle, believing that Chambers had committed 'cultural perjury'<sup>63</sup> as 'by the help of William Chambers's lunettes [the French] have detected us for having stolen our gardens from the Chinese'.<sup>64</sup> Walpole wrote to Mason on 26 May 1773, telling him that he has now 'got [the Epistle] by heart [...] I am now master of all its beauties [...]. You have a vein of irony and satire that the best of causes bleeds for having wanted [...] [Make] Dalrymple [...] but the footstool to the throne as you made poor simple Chambers'.<sup>65</sup> Once again, violent imagery stands as a metaphor for satire: satire has a civilising function, replacing physical conflict such as duelling with a vicious textual strike.<sup>66</sup>

### **'Cloathed in the Garb of Fiction': A Novel Form of Garden**

David Porter identifies a struggle to reconcile the seemingly conflicting credos of the *Treatise on Civil Architecture* (1759) and the *Explanatory Discourse* (1773), as the former railed against frippery and extravagance whilst the latter endorses such extremes of playfulness.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the fashion for Chinoiserie, at its pinnacle in 1759, was fading by 1773; in some quarters it was considered thoroughly passé. From 1763, Elizabeth Montagu had already ensured her

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written on the subject'; the new *Dissertation* went against much of Chambers's original essay.

<sup>63</sup> Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 177.

<sup>64</sup> Horace Walpole to William Mason, 6 September 1775, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), XXVIII, p. 222.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>66</sup> The eleventh edition of *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* was published not with the 'Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-Qua', but with 'An Heroic Epistle in Answer to William Chambers', and the text is 'enriched with *Explanatory Notes*, chiefly extracted from that elaborate performance' (Dublin: W. Wilson, 1773). The text continues to be presented 'at Your Majesty's feet', suggesting that the satire had swiftly turned from anti-establishment into commercially acceptable fair through the laughter (through gritted teeth) and tolerance of William Chambers.

<sup>67</sup> Porter, *Chinese Taste*, p. 41. Chambers designed Somerset House and the Chinese pagoda at Kew: he was an architect capable of multiple modes.

Oriental apartments had had their exoticism muted. By 1773, Chambers was approaching the zenith of his career and fame, having successfully instituted and become president of the Royal Academy, where he had met the Chinese sculptor Tan Chet-Qua. The combined forces of a fading fashion and increasing fame seems to invite a more playful attitude to exotic design. Chambers writes to his friend Le Roy:

You do me the pleasure of summoning your sentiments on the discourse of Chetqua, the response of the quite brutal critiques that people have made about my system of Oriental gardening and that which I wanted to make, without entering in the serious [nature] of ordinary disputation.<sup>68</sup>

Two other possibilities arise in the explanation of the difference between the aesthetic arguments of the two texts. Firstly, that a simple passage of time affected an alteration in taste in Chambers; secondly, whilst theories and example of Classical architecture existed in abundance in Greece and Italy, theories or examples of gardening from the Classical era did not. There were only Renaissance ideals of symmetry, which were still popular in Italy, France, Germany and Spain. Chambers refers in his preface to the Discourse as ‘the artful [...] Antient style’, in which water ‘is taught to flow in geometrick order [...] [and] not a twig is suffered to grow as nature directs’ (vii). Chambers acknowledges that the English hold this style ‘in detestation... no appearance of art is tolerated, our gardens differ very little from common fields’ (vii). He goes on to argue:

It is [...] obvious that neither the artful nor the simple style of Gardening here mentioned is right: the one being too extravagant a deviation from nature; the other too scrupulous an adherence to her. One manner is absurd; the other insipid and vulgar: a judicious mixture of both would certainly be more perfect than either. But how this union can be effected is difficult to say. The men of art, and the

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<sup>68</sup> Chambers to Julien-David Le Roy, 14 May 1773, BL. Add MS 41135 fol. 3.

friends of nature, are equally violent in defence of their favourite system.<sup>69</sup>

This hybrid is exactly what Chambers goes on to promote, but he dresses it up as Chinese to disguise its hybridity. As Quaintance points out, Chambers was an admirer of Burke's "Theory of the Sublime", in which one of the main premises is:

The mind of man has naturally a far greater alacrity and satisfaction in tracing resemblances than in searching for differences; because by making resemblances we produce new images, we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock; but in making distinctions we offer no food at all to the imagination.<sup>70</sup>

As Samuel Holt Monk has argued, Burke's *Enquiry* is 'in many respects representative of its decade, a decade of transition from the stricter ideas of neo-classicism to that individualism and freer interpretation of beauty and other aesthetic ideas'.<sup>71</sup> Chambers advocates freedom of interpretation, yet, even when ventriloquising a Chinese aesthetic to disguise, lightly, a discourse of the sublime and an evocation of gardening as art, Chambers resists absolutism. Having proposed a new theory, he does not present it as the ultimate in gardening but, instead, he then satirises the sublime. His scenes of terror become pantomimical:

Bats, owls, vultures [...] wolves, tigers and jackells [...] half-famished animals [...] gibbets, crosses, wheels, and the whole apparatus of torture [...] [T]hey sometimes conceal cavities, on the summits of the highest volcanoes, foundries, lime-kilns, and glass-works; which send forth large volumes of flame, and continued

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<sup>69</sup> Quaintance, 'Introduction', p. viii-ix.

<sup>70</sup> Quaintance, 'Introduction', p. iii. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757; this edn. London: J. Dodsley, 1767), pp. 18-19.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime: a Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 101.

columns of thick smoke, that give to these mountains the appearance of volcanoes.<sup>72</sup>

This, then, pierces the heart of Chambers's charade: in coming up with his novel system of gardening, Chambers wished to formulate resemblances with the Chinese garden, which in turn feed the imagination. Chambers's purpose was to be playful, not serious, but he was caught out by the vitriolic backlash. Chambers reveals in the second edition that he had 'cloathed [his idea] [...] in the garb of fiction, to secure it a patient hearing'.<sup>73</sup>

Chambers confesses his performance and dressing-up as Chinese person as the outright product of imagination and creativity. That, too, arrives at the central theme of the tract: the importance of imagination and creativity, unfettered by didacticism. What he envisages is an early evocation of the Romantic aesthetic, marking Chambers as one of the forefathers of the Romantic movement, with an emphasis on the grandeur of nature. Chambers continues to consider that there should be an element of taming, which the later Romantic artists rejected, yet he nonetheless advocates the romantic theory of the aesthetic experience. This theory is defined by an emphasis on the emotions of horror, terror, awe and apprehension and the sublimity and picturesque quality of nature. As the *Explanatory Discourse* declares:

Many [...] opportunities would present themselves to the able artist, of dignifying nature, and of heightening his compositions with all the force of novelty and grandeur; stone quarries, chalk pits, mines, might as easily be framed into vast amphitheatres, rustic arcades and perystiles, extensive subterraneous habitations, grottos, vaulted roads, and passages, as into other shapes; hills might, without much difficulty, be transformed into stupendous rocks, by partial incrustations of stone, judiciously mixed with turf, fern, wild shrubs and forest trees; gravel pits, or other similar excavations, might be converted into *the most romantic scenery imaginable* (my italics), by

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<sup>72</sup> Chambers, *Dissertation*, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

the addition of some planting, intermixed with ruins, fragments of sculpture, inscriptions, or any other little embellishments; and, in short, *there would be no deviation, trifling, from the usual march of nature*, but what would suggest, to a fruitful imagination some extraordinary arrangement, something to disguise her vulgarity, to rouse the attention of the spectator, and to excite in his *mind a succession of strong and opposite sensations*.<sup>74</sup>

Chambers seeks to promote a specialisation in the art of gardening, founded on creative principles that enliven the mind, attract the eye and serve a purpose.

Chambers identifies the unifying pleasure of the garden, which different people can appreciate at different levels of profundity. The highest level of artistic wonder can be achieved as Chambers describes, in the Dissertation, the Chinese urge to ‘compare a clear lake, in a calm sunny day, to rich piece of painting, upon which the circumambient objects are represented in highest perfection; and say, it is like an aperture in the world, through which you see another world, another sun, and other skies’.<sup>75</sup>

In the opening dissertation, Chambers asks:

Is it not singular then, that an Art with which a considerable part of our enjoyments is so universally connected, should have no regular professors in our quarter of the world? Upon the continent it is a collateral branch of the Architect's employment; who, immersed in the study and avocations of his own profession, finds no leisure for other disquisitions: and, in this island, it is abandoned to kitchen gardeners, well-skilled in the culture of salads, but little acquainted with the principles of Ornamental Gardening. It cannot be expected that men, Uneducated, and doomed by their condition to waste the vigor of life in hard labour, would ever go far in so refined, so difficult a pursuit. To this unaccountable want of regular masters

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<sup>74</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 32.

<sup>75</sup> *Dissertation*, p. 70.

may, in a great measure, be ascribed the scarcity of perfect gardens.<sup>76</sup>

In the *Explanatory Discourse*, the fake Tan Chet-Qua suggests that he would:

Rather as an Artist [...] set before you a new style of Gardening; than as a Traveller, to relate what I have really seen: and, notwithstanding your strictures you all seemed satisfied, even entertained with the description: there is no doubt, but the reality, like all other realities, would affect you still more strongly than the picture. I have endeavoured to shew how that may be obtained.<sup>77</sup>

A direct declaration of artistic licence, he self-pierces the disguise overtly: he is not a travelling commentator from afar, but a universal proponent of art and beauty.

According to Chambers, the art of gardening is distinct from:

Architecture [...] Painting and [...] most other arts, [which] men must learn before they admire [...] [G]ardening is of a different nature: its dominion is general; its effects upon the human mind certain and invariable: without any previous information, without being taught, all men are delighted with the gay luxuriant scenery of summer [...] the charms of cultivation are equally sensible to the ignorant and the learned; and they are equally disgusted at the rudeness of neglected nature: lawns, woods, shrubberies, rivers and mountains, affect them both in the same manner: and every combination of these, will excite similar sensations in the minds of both.<sup>78</sup>

Rather than advocating discerning taste, Chambers supposes a universal response

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<sup>76</sup> 'Preface', *Dissertation*, p. iii.

<sup>77</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 159.

<sup>78</sup> Preface, *Dissertation*, pp. i-ii.

to a scene. Tan Chet-Qua becomes an appropriate mouthpiece of the universalism of gardening. He was famously unable to speak English yet gained great popularity and renown through his porcelain sculptures: his art spoke to the fashionable elite without words. In the same way, gardening represented a universal art that can transcend borders and languages.

Chambers writes in the closing words of Tan Chet-Qua's explanatory discourse:

Artists of other professions, vary their manners of applying to the human affections; suiting them to the circumstances or nature of the subjects before them; and they are oftenest indebted to these variations for their success; why then should Gardeners always confine themselves to the same tract, and torture all dispositions to adapt them to the same method, like that tyrant of old, who stretched or mutilated every guest till he fitted a particular bed?<sup>79</sup>

Chambers proposes freedom from the tyranny of the Brownists, although he fails to escape their vitriolic reaction to his proposal, despite the Chinese disguise. The contrast between the syntax of the penultimate paragraph of the discourse, quoted above, and the final paragraph, which reverts to a flimsy reference to Tan Chet-qua the man, who recounts:

The hurry of Face-making [which is footnoted falsely as being the Chinese expression for sculpting models and painting portraits] is such that there is scarcely time to eat rice or drink brandy, much less to think: I frequent my wives but by night; I have only heard one of them scold, and seen the others by twilight, these six months.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 122. Chambers's defence of professionalisation and professionalism may be a reaction to the satirical responses to the perceived power structures and socio-cultural hegemonies that emerged from the professionalisation of architecture, landscaping, law, medicine and other jobs. See Penelope J Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (New York: Routledge, 1995; reprint New York: Taylor & Francis, 2002).

<sup>80</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 163.

Face-making seems to be a playful and obviously untrustworthy marker of authenticity, in part due to its ridiculousness; it is a sly and knowing reference to the charade that has been performed in the text.

Doubleness defines Chambers's text, particularly in the tension between the earthiness of practical gardening and the elevation of artistic and aesthetic ideals and in the text's double function as a discourse on gardening and an intellectual battle. The masquerade as Tan Chet-Qua reinforces this double status, as the Chinese costume did not, as Chambers stated he hoped, relocate the discourse to a distance safe from approbation; rather, the dressing-up incited strong reaction.

Despite Chambers's protestations in his letters, I suspect that there was not a straightforward desire to explain his theory further, as the responses of his friends pointed to the lack of clarity they often felt about his ideas on gardening. Instead, the mantle of Chineseness worn by Chambers functioned as a mask, partially disguising the writer whilst drawing attention to him and his ideas: the purpose of a particularly eye-catching and extreme costume.

When criticising British landscapists, Chambers hopes that the distance of ventriloquising a Chinese person will create a gulf of protection; at the same time, it serves to promote the universal appreciation of the beauty of gardens as well as the importance of variety. The mantle of Chineseness evokes the association of the Chinese with the scenic, which was captured on fabric, wallpaper and porcelain, as well as the association of the Chinese aesthetic with intense and multiplicitous ornamentation. The discourse finishes with a serious statement:

Variety is a powerful agent [...] [It] captivates even with trifles [...] the confined, uniform, tasteless walk of imitation [of nature], which you [the English] have fallen into, must have many helps to make it even tolerable; a thousand enlivening additions, to animate its native dullness.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Explanatory Discourse*, p. 162.



The dressing up of the text creates a parallel variety through a trifle, breaking from the confined and uniform text and enlivening what could be perceived as a dull treatise: the text is dressed playfully and artfully to reflect the content of its message.

## Chapter Seven

### **Peter Pindar and the Satirical Dismantling of Translation, Monarchy and Empire**

It is a very easy thing  
Indeed, to make a man a King;  
But since the reign of Kings began,  
How hard to make a King a man!

Peter Pindar, *A Most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China* (1817)

#### **The Origins of Pindar and his Satirical Performance**

The adoption of a Chinese mantle by a satirist is a method of demonstrating the satirist's skill in marshalling potentially threatening material. When adopting a foreign mantle, it could render as suspect the satirist's nationality, race and patriotism unless carefully staged. Peter Pindar undertakes a consciously semi-opaque disguise in his pretended translation of a poem by the Chinese Emperor. Although encouraging laughter at the contrast between the English satirical poet and the aristocratic status of the Emperor, Pindar retains the necessity of knowingness and being known, even when disguising his authorial voice with multiple layers of other voices.

Pindar's interest in the familiar and the over- and under-rated as comic sources is iterated in the subjects of his poems and in the ludic nature of his choice of pseudonym. He presents a complex character who obfuscates and plays with issues of truth, authenticity and multiple layers of disguise. After some success with 'An Epistle to the Reviewers', published in 1778 under his original name, John Wolcot, Pindar then published his first widely received pseudonymous work, *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians for 1782* (1782), whose president was William Chambers.

Pindar's next great success was the *Lousiad: an Heroi-Comical Poem*, printed in 1785, which brought his pseudonymous name to the attention of thousands.

Pindar played with and subverted classical styles as he parodied the structure and content of the *Iliad*, *The Lousiad*, the first of a series of strongly anti-monarchist poems, including several additional cantos to it (1785; 1786) and *Ode upon Ode, or, A Peep at St James's* in 1787.<sup>567</sup>

The secondary adoption of a Chinese mantle complicates further the multifarious and many-layered enterprise of using a pseudonym, creating an increasing tissue of inter-reference. Dr. John Wolcot was a third generation country doctor whose family came from Devon.<sup>568</sup> Wolcot as his alter-ego Pindar adopted carefully an appearance of carelessness and casual Chinese disguise, a decision that was actually highly calculated and beset with meaning. Wolcot supposedly created his pseudonymous name by combining the name of an obstinate pet donkey Peter from his youth and the Greek poet Pindar (ca. 522–443 BC), one of the nine canonical lyric poets of ancient Greece.<sup>569</sup> Of these nine, Ancient Pindar's work is considered to be the best preserved and the classical author enjoyed a significant revival during the seventeenth century, when Abraham Cowley first published an English version of the Pindaric Ode in 1656. Until the close of Queen Anne's reign, the Pindaric Ode became one of the most popular forms for poems celebrating births, weddings and funerals of notable figures in society: a form of celebrity versification.

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<sup>567</sup> The *Lousiad* meets with Broich's assertion that of 'a deliberate game the author plays with his reader, and without a doubt most authors expected their readers to recognise the allusions and see through the disguises. But this game of hide and seek takes on deeper significance when one realises that this was the way in which poets were able at least to seem as if they were obeying the rules of poetics.' Ulrich Broich, *The Eighteenth-century Mock Heroic Poem*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 41.

<sup>568</sup> Adopting an alternative pen-name for the protection of the author's identity was a widespread practice. The introduction to William Gushing's *Initials and pseudonyms: a dictionary of literary disguises* (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1888) records that 'this supplementary volume [...] contains 6500 initials and pseudonyms, answering to 4800 real names'. See also Carmela Ciuraru's *Nom De Plume: A (Secret) History of Pseudonyms* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011).

<sup>569</sup> Fenella Copplestone, 'Introduction', *Peter Pindar: Laughing at the King, Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd, 2009), p. 2.

Wolcot as Pindar inverted the traditional nature and purpose of the seventeenth century Pindaric Odes: once complimentary and celebratory, Pindar's are denigrating and insulting.<sup>570</sup>

The name Pindar had further representative appeal for Wolcot as eighteenth-century literary critics disparaged the Ancient Pindar, an attitude that prevailed until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>571</sup> Although much vaunted by Cowley, Ancient Pindar's atypical metre and structure inspired criticism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ancient Pindar appeared to fail to conform to classical norms, creating an apparently chaotic style by over-using compound adjectives and using odd shifts in subject matter and was thus deemed inferior to the other eight lyrical poets. Consequently, the name Peter Pindar is classical yet subversive: connected to the canon of lyrical poetry but apparently disregarding its rules; it is deliberately absurd, but with an underlying intimation of literariness.

Pindar wore lightly this carefully constructed cloak of anonymity, which was readily penetrated. Gilray published a satirical print about Peter Pindar settling out of court with the 'Bad Earl' of Lonsdale, Thomas Lowther, in 1792, after Pindar's deserved attack on the Earl for starving the miners of Whitehead. The print reveals John Wolcot's identity.<sup>572</sup> This was not some dramatic unmasking: Wolcot was perfectly happy to reveal himself and undertook the task as early as 1788. That year, Wolcot published *An Epistle from Pindar to his Pretended Cousin Peter: in which are many curious and original anecdotes of the pseudo-Pindar*. The poem revealed key biographical details about Wolcot as '[Ancient] Pindar upbraideth Peter for claiming kindred to him, and usurping his name; telleth him to retire to his real origin, and follow his late occupation in

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<sup>570</sup> Pindar may have enjoyed the fact that that Cowley, a Royalist and aristocrat, was ostracised for his Royalist support during the Civil War.

<sup>571</sup> Lawrence Henry Baker, 'Some Aspects of Pindar's Style', *The Sewanee Review*, 31.1 (January 1923): 100-110 (p. 100).

<sup>572</sup> Peter Pindar, *An Epistle from Pindar to his Pretended Cousin Peter: in which are many curious and original anecdotes of the pseudo Pindar with an appendix, Containing Peter's celebrated Song, ``O the Roast Pork of Old Truro,`` being one of the earliest of his Satirical Productions*, 2nd edn (London: J. Bew, 1788). See appendix for image (p. 324).

Cornwall'.<sup>573</sup> It reveals the complex relationship between the pseudonymous writer, his satire and his authentic self, as Wolcot identifies the pseudonym as a false relation, playing with the notion of illegitimacy.

Despite the suggestion of fakery implied by the word 'pseudo', the text does give actual biographical details from Pindar/Wolcot's life in the poem 'The Painter and the Doctor' (5-9). Having spent some time in Jamaica, in 1774 Wolcot returned to being a doctor in Truro, but swiftly made enemies due to his habit of publishing verses about those locals who displeased him. In 1775, Wolcot discovered John Opie, a Cornish painter; together they travelled to London. Sadly, Opie's new wife's family encouraged a split between the two men. However, in the poetical biography, Wolcot is cast ironically as 'th'oppressor' and 'th'insulting tyrant' of young 'O\*\*\*' (Opie); 'Pindar' addresses 'Peter' in a didactic manner, stating 'Peter there was a Doctor just like you; / A man who meanly thought to gain / His living from the artless swain [Opie]'; and so it becomes a pseudo-biography.<sup>574</sup>

The poem begins with an imagined address by Ancient Pindar, who asserts 'Peter, how darest thou degrade my fame? / What right hast thou to claim akin to me? / Why surreptitiously usurp my name, / And make me partner in thy infamy?'.<sup>575</sup> Here, the adoption of the mantle of another is akin to theft. The pseudo-biographical poem reveals the interrelationship between the mask and its wearer as an active one; here the mask literally speaks. When the pseudonym speaks, it takes on its own identity and voice to upbraid the doctor lurking beneath the veil of anonymity. The poem is not an attempt to recreate the voice of Ancient Pindar; rather, the narrator adopts a lexicon of haunting, as 'conscience fears the disembodied ghosts; / who, driv'n from life, by thy prescriptions, wander, in horrid gloom, depriv'd of all repose'.<sup>576</sup>

As Wolcot had successfully imitated classical forms in other, more serious poems, it suggests that such a departure from classical form is deliberate. The reader is

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<sup>573</sup> Pindar, *Epistle*, p. 3.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

supposed to recognise that the identity of Pindar-as-narrator is a construct distinct from the classical author, even though supposedly it is the classical author who is addressing Peter Pindar so indignantly. When an author adopts the mantle of another, it is not to replicate that other, which would render the author a copyist or plagiarist, but to expose the mastery of the masked author: the mask simultaneously reveals and conceals.<sup>577</sup>

Pindar's mask is penetrable on a number of levels: the half-respected, half-vilified Ancient Pindar is an appropriate disguise for a clever eighteenth-century satirist. The satirical attack is a partial disguise for a country doctor, who is not such an execrable medic as the poem suggests, nor must the reader believe outright that 'Fame [...] / saith you'd prostitute the name of God [...] / and all that's good, for gain'.<sup>578</sup> The conceit addresses the criticisms of Peter Pindar's contemporaries, including his aggrandising pseudonym, humble non-literary origins, and rudeness in all its meaning: discourteous and impolite; without learning, culture or refinement; roughly wrought; and of rural simplicity.

Pindar reveals frequently but indirectly his theory of satirical poetry. For example, in the epigrams that head *Odes to Kien Long*, Pindar includes a fragment from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, ('*Iamque opus exegi*') 'And now my work is done', an obscure reference from Book XV, from which the meaning of the line is best understood in the context of two lines, 871 and 872: '*Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis / nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas*' [And now my work is done, which neither the anger of Jupiter, / Nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to destroy].<sup>579</sup>

Pindar was popular in the impermanent literatures of the coffee houses, circulating libraries, magazines and newspapers. Yet this Latin fragment not only declares

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<sup>577</sup> See H. Weinbrot, 'Masked Men and Satire and Pope: Towards An Historical Basis for the Eighteenth-Century Persona', in *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34-52; see also Maximillian E. Novak, *English Literature in the Age of Disguise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) and Robert C. Elliott, *The Literary Persona* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>578</sup> Pindar, *Epistle*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>579</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.871-872.

permanence and resilience but also demands specific classical learning, ensuring certain levels of meaning were inaccessible to the lower sort of reader. Pindar reveals, through adopting the words of another, that he is only offering the appearance of praise, casting a shadow of irony over his introductory platitudes directed at ‘the Great Kien Long’: Pindar includes the Horatian phrase, also in Latin, ‘To please great men is not the ultimate degree of praise’.<sup>580</sup>

One of the few academics to pay attention to Pindar, Howard Weinbrot draws out the way in which Pindar’s satire significantly darkens the form since the earlier satirists, specifically Pope. Pindar’s subjects and tone retain a superficial frivolity, masking the message beneath. An informed and thinking reader, whose ability to read intertextually can help to identify deeper strains of criticism and anxiety beneath the mantle of light humour. The adoption of a double mantle, firstly of the pseudonymous Pindar and then of a Chinese or of a translator, makes the identification of the laughed-at object much more slippery. It encourages acceptance of multiple sources of laughter: the orient, occidental interest in the East, royalty, imperialism, authority, illegitimate poetry, pomposity, greed; all are targeted.

Pindar’s satirical poetry contains a didactic message, sometimes implicitly and at others explicitly, delivered from beyond the social circle in which his targets moved. According to Weinbrot, ‘according to Peter, Horatian satire is not sly, polite, and insinuating, but is once again the product of rage’.<sup>581</sup> The volubility of Pindar in his mockery and expositions was sufficiently public, loud and strident that the government tried to suborn Pindar with a pension, which he accepted and then apparently returned in a fit of integrity. Weinbrot’s analysis of Pindar’s work considers, accurately, that ‘much of it has the compromised and compromising charm of a Roylandson or Gillray print, in which the world seems to be populated by grotesques of whom we disapprove, but by whom neither we nor the artist are

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<sup>580</sup> *Odes to Kien Long*, p. 3. Horace, ‘Epistle I.17.35’ in *Epistles of Horace, Book I*, ed. by David Ferry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Archive, 1956), p. 36.

<sup>581</sup> Weinbrot, pp. 198-199.

threatened [...] We laugh at such verbal cartoons in which the superiority of contempt replaces insecurity of isolated outrage'.<sup>582</sup>

The interrelationship between actual, verbal and living cartoons is reflected in Terry Castle's description of the 'merging of self and other' afforded by masquerade, which could lead to 'masqueraders [who] sometimes resembled walking political cartoons' but 'by the turn of the century, masquerade imagery began to symbolise morbidity rather than a collective and promiscuous joy'.<sup>583</sup> This reflects the evolution from the masquerading mantle of Chineseness in Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* (1760), which promotes a positive globalism to Pindar's savage satirical performance of the fake translation of the Emperor's words.

### **Pindar and the Chinese Poems**

Pindar's mock poetical communication with the Emperor of China plays with earlier positions of western admiration for eastern Imperial rule. In his *Odes to Kien Long*, Pindar appears to prize the apparent enlightenment of the Chinese Emperor, declaring, 'Thou art a second Atlas, great Kien Long; supporting half th' unwieldy globe, so strong'.<sup>584</sup> In seeming to align himself as a fellow poet with the Emperor, 'thy brother Pindar' (Ode I, p.5), Pindar satirises the desire to connect with the Chinese, addressing the Emperor directly:

Dear Emp'ror, Prince of Poets, noble Bard,  
Thy brother Peter sendeth thee a card,  
To say thou art an honour to the times—  
Yes, PETER telleth thee, that for a King,

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<sup>582</sup> Weinbrot, p. 198.

<sup>583</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, pp. 90, 207.

<sup>584</sup> Pindar, 'Ode II', *Odes to Kien Long: the present emperor of China; with The Quakers, a tale; To a fly, drowned in a bowl of punch* (Edinburgh: H. D. Symonds, and Robertson and Berry, 1792), p. 8.

The statement ironises the earlier admiration for China that rendered it as the other half of the world. For example, in the frontispiece to *La Balance Chinoise, ou Lettres d'un Chinois* (1768), a balance is displayed weighing Europe against the Empire of China, overseen by a mandarin reprinted in Chi-Ming Yang, *Performing China*, p. 7.



Indeed a most extraordinary thing,  
Thou really makest very charming rhimes.<sup>585</sup>

The reference to the Bard has ironic Shakespearean connotations, whilst Pindar also compares himself directly with the Emperor in terms of poetical ability; by using hackneyed rhymes, simple language and irregular metre, the text represents a deliberate denigration of Kien Long's poetry. The poor poetry is a performance, as is his expression of his admiration for the Emperor's civilised artistic mien, which compares favourably with the supposedly ignorant George III, who is presented in the guise of the mocked and maligned 'Farmer George', with his famous vocal tic: 'How go sheep a score? / What, what's the price of bullock?'.<sup>586</sup>

Although he served to entertain his readers, Pindar also suggests, in the opening to *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and His Ship* (1792) that he wishes to present to the Emperor the story of recent military manoeuvres at Bagshot Heath. The two poems function as part of Pindar's poetical manifesto, in which he regards his poetry as a freer and more critical form than the work of historians, whom he believes regard current events to 'be disdained by the fastidious pen of History, [although they] ought to be recorded'.<sup>587</sup> Pindar accuses historians of being 'too conceitedly lofty to think of sully[ing] a page with an account of the Camp-transaction' and believes he must fill the gap in recording events that either reflect upon the nation poorly, that have been dismissed unworthy to be accounted for in the annals of history.<sup>588</sup>

With the supposed plan of sending them to Kien Long, Pindar records the review of troops that took place at Bagshot Heath in 1792. The troop movements at Bagshot were intended as part of a demonstration of strength and loyalty to the King at a time of political instability and anti-monarchist sentiment. Instead, though, Pindar highlights the suffering of the troops, with a sarcastic account of

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<sup>585</sup> 'Ode I', pp. 1-6.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>587</sup> Peter Pindar, 'A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and his Ship', *Works of Peter Pindar, esq. With a Copious Index*, 4 vols (London: Walker and Edwards, 1812), III, p. 121.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid.

their quality, and the suffering of British agriculturalists. Pindar gives veiled warning to the government and aristocracy by referencing the mistakes of the beheaded King Charles and linking him to the French Revolution.

For Charles, 'to support a bastard and a whore / impos'd tax on coals that starved the poor: / Those sans-culottes men made the saddest din! / But mark, how often good proceeds from evil'.<sup>589</sup> Thus, Pindar links the French revolution to the English civil war one hundred and sixty years earlier. This is significant, as the review of troops at Bagshot took place in August of 1792: in France, on August 10<sup>th</sup>, the assault on Tuileries took place and Louis XVI fled with the Royal family. Furthermore, Pindar links the events to Richmond's troop review, for 'Richmond cast a lustre round the sin [of Charles I]'.<sup>590</sup> The display was supposed to inspire fear in Londoners and be a demonstration of British military might and their control by the Duke of Richmond. Pindar remarks caustically:

Say [to Kien Long], how [Richmond] gallop'd wild, up hill, down dale;  
Frighten'd each village, turn'd each hovel pale;  
Struck all the birds with terror, save the crows,  
Who, spying such commotion in the land,  
Concluded some great matter was in hand,  
Much blood and carnage midst contending foes.<sup>591</sup>

By threatening to present these poems to the Emperor Kien Long, Pindar was potentially exposing Britain to the scrutiny of a representative of the outside world. The poem is littered with imperatives dripping in irony and directed at Macartney: 'Of our Bagshot wonders tell Kien long'; 'Talk to Kien Long about his Grace [Richmond's] soul'; 'Let the Empr'or all about [Richmond] hear'.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid., p. 125. Unlike Chambers, who was turned Francophile after studying there, Pindar hated his time in France, although he became fluent in the language.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid., pp. 123, 124, 127.

The poem becomes increasingly fantastical, finishing with an imagined response by the Emperor:

[If a]ll the rank and file are like his Grace – then I shall shake upon my sapphire throne: for troops like Richmond’s, that on valour feast, may, like wild meteors, pour into mine East and leave my palace neither stick nor stone; like roaring lions rush to eat me up – In Britain breakfast and in China sup.<sup>593</sup>

This serves to emphasise the disparity in wealth between Britain and China, as the sapphire throne contrasts with the troops who have so little to eat that they dine on valour alone.

The antic nature intensifies in the opening of the second epistle, ‘To the Ship’, as it opens with a vision of the ‘gaudy gentlemen [...] with coaches just like gingerbread [...] Amid the Asiatic world to shine’.<sup>594</sup> This apparent homage to Charles Perrault’s fairy tales depicts the embassy travelling through scenes filled with ‘pagodas [...] mountains [...] cuckoos [...] geese [...] monkeys [...] frogs [...] butterflies [...] goats, sheep and oxen [...] buffaloes and dromedaries [...] and elephants’ bearing witness and ‘grin[ning] applause’ at the arrival of ‘the glitt’ring coaches’.<sup>595</sup> The increasingly fantastical nature of the poem reflects the fantasy of war in which Richmond was indulging, and implies the ambitions of the Embassy were equally far-fetched. The reference to ‘gaudy’ and ‘glittr’ing’ evoke European trickery and falsehood.

Tim Fulford, who looks broadly at the orientalisering of satire, posits that satirists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gave an ‘Orientalist diagnosis of Britain’s ills’.<sup>596</sup> However, his assessment that ‘Orientalism fostered capitalism that was as morally and politically dangerous as it was all-pervasive’ does not

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<sup>593</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. p. 133-34.

<sup>596</sup> Tim Fulford, ‘“Getting and Spending”: The Orientalization of Satire in Romantic London’, in *The Satiric Eye*, pp. 11-29, (p. 22).

reflect wholly the efforts of Pindar.<sup>597</sup> Pindar attacks the Ambassadorial venture as one driven by British impoverishment and desperation, warning the Chinese Emperor:

Pitt shav'd *our* faces first, and made us grin—  
Next the *poor French*—and now the hopeful LAD,  
Ambitious of the honour, seemeth mad  
To try this razor's edge upon *thy* chin.  
Thee as a *generous* Prince we all regard;  
For ev'ry present, lo, returning *double*.<sup>598</sup>

Pitt appears the cut-throat aggressor: the moral and political danger is not of the Orient towards the Occident but an Occidental threat to itself and to China, triggered by the perception of possibilities suspected to exist in China. At the same time, Pindar's poem reveals both Kien Long and George III to be vulnerable to attack, governed by peccadilloes and eccentricities, whether as poet or farmer.<sup>599</sup>

Timed for the return of the Embassy, Pindar wrote a further series of poems, "A Panegyric on Tea by Kien Long, written in his tent, during a hunting excursion, near Moukden", which was included in the collection *Pindariana* (1794).<sup>600</sup> In this poem, the author presents an extended dressing up of a text as Chinese, which furthered his attack on the inadequacies of monarchical rule.

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<sup>597</sup> Fulford, pp. 11-12.

<sup>598</sup> Pindar, 'Ode V: Odes to Kien Long', in *Works*, III, p. 161. Known for his austerity, Pitt gave a speech proposing the reduction of public debt which included cuts to the army and navy budgets and the ending of the Hessian subsidy, as well as other domestic grants. *The speech of the Right Hon. William Pitt, chancellor of the exchequer, on Friday, the 17th day of February 1792, on proposing the application of an additional sum for the reduction of the public debt, and the repeal of certain duties on malt, on female servants, on carts and waggons, on houses, and on candles* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinsons, 1792).

<sup>599</sup> In this way, Pindar possesses what Nokes has suggested is 'the imagination of the great satirist [...] transform[ing] the quotidian elements of its subject matter into permanent symbols of human folly and corruption'. *Raillery and Rage*, p. 3.

<sup>600</sup> Pindar, 'A Panegyric on Tea', *Works*, IV, p. 36.

The multiple layers of intertextuality begin with the inclusion of a transliterated, Romanised version of the Chinese poem, followed by a deliberately hackneyed ‘translation’ of it. The transliterated text has been taken from a footnoted explanation of a quotation included beneath the title of a fictionalised account by William Chambers of the Chinese artist Tam Chet-Qua’s supposed views on Oriental gardening, which is ‘annexed’ to Chambers’ *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1773). The translation that Peter Pindar offers in ‘A Panegyric on Tea’ is his own satirical version of the translation given by Chambers of an Imperial poem presented in French by Pere Amiot, *Eulogium of Moukden and its Surrounding Environs* (1770). This performance of translation is followed by an ironic piece entitled “An Ode to Coffee”, presented as composed ‘in the style of Kien Long’.

French Jesuits were responsible for much of the written material sent from China but, by 1796, rising antipathy towards and fear of post-revolutionary France heightened the reaction against French-sourced Chinese materials.<sup>601</sup> Chambers’s explanatory discourse, supposedly contributed by Tan Chet-Qua, was humorous in intent and playful in its attitude to disguise and impersonation, offering exactly the elements with which Pindar liked to play. What was once novel and interesting, the Chinese Emperor as poet, Pindar now explores as over-familiar.

Masquerade exploits the dualism of superiority and inferiority, in which the masquerader may dress in an inferior costume and/or observers can mock the penetrable masquerade. This paradigm of superiority and inferiority is reflected in Frances Hutcheson’s belief that parody and burlesque allusion could ‘move laughter in those who may have the highest veneration for the writing alluded to, and also admire the wit of the person who makes the allusion’.<sup>602</sup>

This suggests that the parodic element of Pindar’s odes is not a straightforward abuse of the original. Hutcheson argues against Hobbes’s proposal that humour is derived from ‘superiority of ourselves above some other thing’, arguing ‘that

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<sup>601</sup> By using Chambers’s work rather than working directly from the French, the text is distanced from its continental translation. The year of Pindar’s publication, 1796, was also the year of Chambers’s death, and so there is the possibility of ironic homage.

<sup>602</sup> Frances Hutcheson, *Reflections Upon Laughter, and Remarks Upon the Fable of the Bees*, (1725; this edn. Glasgow: R. Urie, 1750), p. 8.

laughter often arises without any imagined superiority of ourselves' (7). Nevertheless, Pindar recognised a greater flexibility than this either/or response to the humour of feeling superior; he frequently adopts an ironic position of superiority in generating humour. Furthermore, the imitative nature of parody invokes the same mantle-bearing issues: parodic verse bears the mantle of the parodied verse in order to extract humour from what is similar yet different. The interplay between self, the new satirical verse, and other, the other texts which are being parodied, generates laughter and contemplation of similarity and difference.

As Dryden remarked, 'the principal end of satyr is to instruct people by discrediting vice [...] [teaching] the noblest ethicks to reform mankind'.<sup>603</sup> Samuel Johnson espouses a similar view, suggesting that 'a man should pass a part of his time with the laughers (sic), by which means any thing ridiculous or particular about him might be presented to his view, and corrected'.<sup>604</sup> The relationship is complicated, however, by the persona, Pindar, adopting a Chinese mantle: it doubles the issues surrounding performativity, authenticity and self and makes meaning ever more slippery. On the one hand, the poem is a straightforward critique of indolent and excessive consumption; however, there are other multiple, more nuanced critiques that are attached to the satirical performance.

Pindar believed in the didactic and pedagogic role of satire. Basing his work upon layers of intertextual disguise and fakery, he casts a deliberate shadow on his own deceitful work, as he uses masquerade to parade truth.<sup>605</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> John Dryden, *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1693), p. 42.

<sup>604</sup> James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D. Together with the journal of a tour to the Hebrides*, 5 vols (London: G. Bell, 1884), IV, p. 125.

<sup>605</sup> Pindar adds a further layer of complexity through a traceable series of interference and self-reference. In his *Odes to Kien Long* of 1792, Pindar declares in his address to the Emperor: 'thy praises of MOUKDEN, thy beautiful little Ode to TEA, &C. have afforded me infinite delight; and to gain my *plaudit*, who am rather difficult to please, will, I assure thee, be a feather in thy imperial cap'. The irony is that, by 1796, Pindar's 'translation' of the 'little Ode to Tea' was the only readily available copy in English. Not only does this challenge the assumed sarcasm of Pindar's praises, as he must have seen some attraction in playing with the work, once Pindar publishes his collected works 1812 and brings together all of his poems, it becomes a form of self-referential intertextuality. By presenting the works together in one complete volume, it further blurs the origins and originator of the text: when ironically complimenting 'The Little Ode to Tea', Pindar

Pindar ‘translates’ Kien Long’s poem significantly differently, as Chambers’s work is in the style and uses the lexis of a philosophic essay, serving as a close translation of the French:

The colours of the Meihoa are never brilliant, yet is the flower  
always pleasing: in fragrance or neatness the fo-cheou has no equal:  
the fruit of the pine is aromatick, its odour inviting. In gratifying at  
once the sight, the smell and the taste, nothing exceeds these three  
things: and if, at the same time, you put, upon a gentle fire, an old  
pot, with three legs, grown black and battered with length of service,  
after having first filled it with the limpid water of melted snow; and  
if, when the water is heated to a degree that will boil a fish, or  
redde a lobster, you pour it directly into a cup made of the earth of  
yué, upon the tender leaves of superfine tea.<sup>606</sup>

By evoking an elevated, philosophical style, Chambers is deliberately reflecting the popularity of Chinese Confucian thought and the essays and philosophical musings it inspired in the works of luminaries such as Leibniz, Wolff and Voltaire. Pindar’s satirical translation is hackneyed, with clunky rhymes, repetitive and simplistic expression and bathetic moments:

THE flow’r *Meihoa* is not so bright,  
And yet it gives the eye delight;  
It likewise has a charming smell:  
The pines, too, are a pretty fruit,  
That much indeed my palate suit,  
And much in flavour, too, excel.  
Get an old kettle, if you please,  
For such a thing is found with ease,

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could be referring to the Emperor, Amiot, Chambers or, later, in an oblique way, to his own version. Dustin H. Griffin has suggested that eighteenth-century producers and promoters of satire ‘were driven to insist not only[...] [was it] a moral art but that it was clearly and explicitly didactic and moralizing’. Dustin H. Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), p. 25.

<sup>606</sup> William Chambers, *An Explanatory Discourse* (1773), p. 120.

That has three legs—and therefore show  
Its ancient services;—then fill  
With water, and what's best, the rill,  
The lucid rill, from melted snows.<sup>607</sup>

Pindar could be dismissed as a terrible poet with a serious point disguised by humour, churning out amusing and politicised but badly written work: the *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* contains a single line review of Peter Pindar's work, declaring, 'We cannot see any merit in the poetry or the prints of this poetaster'.<sup>608</sup>

Yet, the bawdy and scurrilous verse of the poem contrasts with Pindar's other poetry, which demonstrates far greater range than that of prosaic simplicity: Pindar's other poetical output has been variously confused with that of Samuel Coleridge and Samuel Johnson. Consequently, the apparent poor literary quality of his satirical verses possesses a more complex function than merely being the product of ineptitude.<sup>609</sup>

Even though Pindar produced his satirical poetry quickly in response to current events, and always wrote with the work's marketability in mind, the flexibility of

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<sup>607</sup> Pindar, 'A Panegyric on Tea', *Works*, IV, p. 37.

<sup>608</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*. 68 (London, 1788), p. 816. The *Gentleman's Magazine's* derisive review of Pindar's work was probably due to the magazine's strong affiliation with Samuel Johnson, who made his name writing for the magazine; Johnson and his biographer, whom Pindar immortalised in a poem as 'Bozzy', were frequently the target of Pindar's vicious pen. Nevertheless, it was a mutual enmity, for Johnson attacked Pindar in the *Rambler* as 'that gross and libidinous creature, who styles himself Peter Pindar'. Samuel, Johnson, 'Rambler, 77', *A Critical Enquiry Into the Moral Writings of Dr. Samuel Johnson: In which the Tendency of Certain Passages in the Rambler, and Other Publications of that Celebrated Writer, is Impartially Considered, To which is Added an Appendix Containing a Dialogue Between Boswell and Johnson in the Shades*, ed. by William Mudford (London: C. Corral, 1802), p. 52.

<sup>609</sup> Coleridge's poem entitled 'To Delia', probably composed by Coleridge in the autumn of 1799: see *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by J. C. C. Mays, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), I, p. 602. The poem had previously been ascribed to Samuel Johnson. Research into both the handwriting and the sale history of the manuscript has revealed that it is actually the work of Pindar. Marianne Van Remoortel, 'A Poem Wrongly Ascribed to Johnson and Coleridge', *Notes and Queries*, 57.2 (2010): 211-213. Pindar's pastiches, textual mimesis, pseudonymous writing and adopted identities resulted in Pindar's work, so often defined by layers of playfulness, being rendered unrecognisable: his identity as a writer so diluted that his literary worth was similarly degraded.



his style suggests that the conscious awfulness of the hackneyed construction of the poem possesses further meaning.

‘A Panegyric on Tea’ may be a response to the work of Thomas Percy and William Jones on Chinese literature, as the latter in particular emphasised the importance to Chinese writers of rhyme schemes and the brevity and conciseness of lines, which the Chambers and Amiot translations failed to reflect. Whilst William Jones was occupied by issues of accuracy and the balance between meaning and style in the challenging literal and metaphorical journey from Chinese to English, and whilst other orientalist writers working indirectly with Chinese texts engaged in a focus upon authenticity and traceable origins, Pindar viewed anxiety about authentic translation as a possibility for playing with the gap between, or what Bhabha calls the ‘third space’.<sup>610</sup>

Bhabha writes from the perspective of the migrant culture in contact with the western cultural hegemonies, yet his theoretical framework can be useful in examining the cultural contact between England and China. Dislocation occurs in the English experience of Chinese certainty, stability and un-changing nature, as the English Embassy experienced out-of-placeness in China and their understanding of cultural norms and the English place in the world order was disrupted.

This third space became an opening for satirical translation, resulting in texts that function and exist in a manner distinct from those with serious intent in their efforts to translate from one language to another: eighteenth-century satirical *translation* also functions differently from those who were writing in a satirical voice as a Chinese figure, such as Chambers, Goldsmith or Walpole. During the eighteenth century, issues of translation attracted translators’ consideration; the satirist could then exploit these issues. Analyses of the process of translation usually appeared in the preface or introduction to texts. Most texts produced in translation included comment upon the process in a note from the translator, either excusing the failings of the translator and/or revealing where the supposed

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<sup>610</sup> The product of ‘translation between cultures’ can generate ‘borderline affects and identifications’ in ‘the third space’ or ‘inbetween space’. Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 167.

inadequacies or limitations of the text had been improved. It was an anxiety that was not restricted to British translators: as commented upon in chapter three, Father Gramont writes an apologia expressing his concern as to whether he and his colleagues ‘have expressed ourselves improperly’ in English.<sup>611</sup> Fulsome explanatory notes usually accompanied translated texts, serving to enlighten the reader on the particulars of the cultural alterity that might inhibit comprehension. Consequently, the translator in the eighteenth century was both present and active in the engagement with the text. The text becomes a fluid and unstable version of itself, raising questions of authorship and authenticity; the satirical translator could play with these anxieties about creativity and the desire to refine the translated text.

Modern translation theory generally emphasises, to a larger or lesser extent, that a translated text does represent something new and/or different from the text from which it is produced.<sup>612</sup> These ideas were familiar to the eighteenth-century translator, such as in William Jones’s efforts to seek Whang Atong’s advice upon the translation of the Chinese Shee King poems. Jones’s attempt indicates that there was an early dismantling of the notion of translation as a ‘one way process’ defined by a perceived cultural hegemony of west above east; instead, it is evidence that there existed a limited ‘reciprocal process of exchange’.<sup>613</sup> In a similar manner, Pindar engaged in his own pretended reciprocity. Echoing Oliver Goldsmith’s Editor’s Preface to *A Citizen of the World* (1760), which employs the language of trade as Goldsmith suggests the introduction to Britain of ‘a small cargo of Chinese morality’, Pindar declares:

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<sup>611</sup> *Philosophical Transactions* (1809), IV, p. 148.

<sup>612</sup> See, for example, *Decentering Translation Studies: India and Beyond*, eds. Judy Wakabayashi and Rita Kothari (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009).

<sup>613</sup> Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, ‘Introduction’, *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 5. When the second draughtsman for the Macartney Embassy, William Alexander, was making his rough sketches of the things he saw in China, he sometimes asked for Chinese assistance in labelling the work with the Chinese character and for acquiring the phonetic transcription of the pronunciation of the word in Chinese, which Alexander then translated into English. In 1800, a Chinese book emerged that attempted the phonetic transcription of English words in Chinese script in order to assist Chinese merchants in communicating with the British.

As Lord Macartney, with his most splendid retinue, is about to open a trade with thee, in the various articles of tin, blankets, woollen in general, &c. &c. in favour of the two Kingdoms; why might not a *literary commerce* take place between the GREAT KIEN LONG, and the no less celebrated Peter Pindar?<sup>614</sup>

The shift in emphasis from Goldsmith's importation to Pindar's exchange reflects the time in which it was written, when the Macartney Embassy sought goods to take to China.

Pindar indicates his anxiety about the paucity of the goods being sent to the Far East in his further announcement that he is not 'a literary swindler, unable to repay thee for goods [he] may receive from thy Imperial Majesty'.<sup>615</sup> Pindar implies that other exchanges with the Chinese have been in some way unbalanced. Adopting the scientific lexis of a member of the Royal Society, Pindar declares he 'now transmit[s] specimens' of literature, supposedly via the Macartney Embassy to China.<sup>616</sup> Because he is pretending to send a text to China, Pindar challenges the habits of collecting and gathering objects from abroad by performing an ironic inversion of the process.

Unlike Goldsmith's philosopher, Pindar's Emperor is not an agent via whom external and elevated scrutiny of the shortcomings of western monarchs and their governments occurs. In the collection *Odes to Kien Long*, the Emperor is cast as a sounding board, but in 'A Panegyric on Tea', he becomes a mirror of the absurdity of monarchs. As the Emperor is a distant ruler, Pindar writes more confidently and with an explicit directness that he fails quite to muster with the Emperor's British counterparts as, on British soil, Pindar had to play a delicate

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<sup>614</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World* (1760; London, J. and R. Childs, 1820), p. iii. *Odes to Kien Long: the present emperor of China; with The Quakers, a tale; To a fly, drowned in a bowl of punch* (Edinburgh: H. D. Symonds, and Robertson and Berry, 1792), p. 3. Ironically, in Britain, the commercial value of these poems was considerable, as a third edition in September 1793 ran to 2000 copies were sold at three shillings each. Donald Kerr, 'Satire is Bad Trade': Dr. John Wolcot and his Publishers and Printers in Eighteenth-Century England', p. 45.

<sup>615</sup> *Odes to Kien Long*, p. 3.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

balance between candour and treason. By pretending to address the Chinese Emperor, Pindar is able to employ a direct, intimate and conversational tone, with instructions as ‘Peter telleth thee’, which he never adopts with the British monarch, to whom he only refers relatively circumspectly as one of ‘some western Kings’ or ‘our Prince’.<sup>617</sup>

The ludic quality of Pindar’s satirical work is determinedly anti-establishment. His work serves to highlight the individual absurdity of rulers of both East and West, teasing out the idea that all such rule is incongruous. Pindar jokingly proposes parity between himself and the Emperor, who will supposedly appreciate Pindar’s work for he is ‘the no less celebrated Peter Pindar’ (3): an alignment between outsiders, beyond the London-centric elite.

Pindar’s use of irony creates a veneer of apparent praise and supposed quality, which proves a fragile disguise, for the reader may readily discern the underlying criticisms of the specimens and their contents. His satirical poetry possesses a ludic complexity that ensures its response to the Macartney Embassy of 1792 is both engaging and offers an alternative vision of exchange between Britain and China.

In the series of pretended translation of ‘A Panegyric on Tea’, Pindar attempts the rehumanisation of the Emperor, anthropomorphising the celestial being that the Imperial Court had represented in a letter to George III in response to the Macartney Embassy. In this letter, the Emperor defended his cool treatment of the Embassy whilst repeating eight times a reference to his ‘Celestial Empire’ and its authority over other nations. The letter states that ‘Our dynasty, swaying the myriad races of the globe, extends the same benevolence towards all. Your England is not the only nation trading at Canton’, and refers twice to the English traders as ‘barbarian merchants’.<sup>618</sup> In reaction to this letter, Pindar’s performance of a translation of the poem, which culminates with the pretence that

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5.

<sup>618</sup> *Emperor Qian Long’s Letter to King George III, 1793*, quoted in E. Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), pp. 322-331. Thomas Mathias also satirised the letter in the poem *The Imperial Epistle from Kien Long* (London: Griffin, 1794).

this poem is ‘Compos’d by *me* (a humble Bard) Kien Long’ (Pindar’s italics), emphasises the base humanity and near-barbarism of the Emperor’s self-declared need to ‘sit, and eat, and drink, and [...] mark the *second* quaffing the rich water’ until ‘[his] stomach [...] so easy grown!’<sup>619</sup> The oxymoronic statement of humility and poetical mastery add to the irony in the evocation of gluttony: the lines are followed by the Emperor’s declaration, ‘Thank Heav’n-few vulgar taste was never *mine*’.<sup>620</sup>

The ironic opposition aligns with Francis Hutcheson’s observation about humorous contrast, in which ‘contrast between ideas of grandeur, dignity, sanctity, perfection and ideas of meanness, baseness, profanity, seems to be the very spirit of burlesque’.<sup>621</sup>

Pindar has shifted from a performance of exposure of British weakness, reinforcing the Gilray’s image trope of the greedy and bloated Imperial figure of the cartoon.<sup>622</sup> Further intertextuality occurs between the Imperial poem and Frances Hutcheson’s *Reflections upon Laughter and Remarks Upon the Fable of Bees* (1750). In ‘A translation of the preceding ode’, the supposed poem of Kien Long is ‘translated’ as meaning:

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<sup>619</sup> Pindar, ‘A Panegyric on Tea’, in *Works*, IV, p. 39.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid. Pindar probably knew that poetry was used in the execution of political communications between Chinese mandarins and the Emperor, in addition to being a renowned Chinese method of revering one’s ancestors or predecessors and a key purpose of the Imperial ‘Eulogium of Moukden’. Pindar delights in both the political importance of poetry in China and in corrupting this reverential model of poetry. It is arguable, although hard to prove, that subsequent criticism of the Imperial poem that took place in the *Quarterly Review* (1810) may have been influenced by Pindar’s hackneyed version, as in the account of Stephen Weston’s ‘Conquest of the Miao-tse’ in which ‘The Ode on Tea, from the same imperial pen, is only, in our plebeian judgments, to occupy a place in the *Almanac des Gourmands, or Mrs. Glass’s Art of Cookery*; and as neither of those valuable compilations possesses the Emperor’s receipt for making tea, we shall insert a translation of this culinary ode. ‘Set an old three-legged teapot over a slow fire; fill it with water of melted snow; boil it just as long as is necessary to turn fish white, or lobsters red; pour it on the leaves of choice in a cup of youe. Let it remain till the vapour subsides into a thin mist, floating on the surface. Drink this precious liquor at your leisure, and thus drive away the five causes of sorrow’’. *Quarterly Review*, 4 (1810), p. 365. The lexis, form and structure is much closer to Pindar’s version than to the work of Amiot or Chambers.

<sup>621</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *Reflections Upon Laughter, and Remarks Upon the Fable of the Bees* (Glasgow: R. Urie, 1750), p. 19.

<sup>622</sup> See appendix for image (p. 325).

Heat in this kettle, to your wish,  
The Water, fit to boil a fish,  
Or turn the blackest lobster red:  
Pour then the water on the Tea;  
Then drink it; and 'twill drive, d'ye see.  
All the blue devils from your head.<sup>623</sup>

Hutcheson writes, 'Again, to what do we compare ourselves, or imagine ourselves superior, when we laugh at this fantastical imitation of the poetical imagery, and similitudes of the morning? *The Sun, long since, had in the lap / Of Thetis taken out his nap; / And, like a lobster boil'd, the morn / From black to red began to turn*'.<sup>624</sup> Hutcheson took these lines for analysis from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras II* (1664), an epic satire of the hypocrisy and pomposity of Puritan rule. Using the character of the same name from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Butler published his satirical allegory as an attack upon the Civil War and what the Royalist poet perceived as sedition amongst the Roundheads.

Hogarth's prints of the story maintained eighteenth-century interest in the satire; for Pindar, watching the French Revolution unfolding across the Channel, his pretended Chinese translation served as a reminder to his readers of the dangers of misrule. Furthermore, it was an ironically false statement of universal observation, as Pindar pretends that Occidental and Oriental writers had used the same vehicle for metaphor.

Reference to Hutcheson's theory of laughter means that the alert and informed reader would be aware of the analysis of humour that Hutcheson attached to the lines:

An imagined superiority [...] is not a matter so rare as to raise sudden joy [...] Thus allusions made on trifling occasions, to the most solemn figured speeches of great writers, contain such an

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<sup>623</sup> Pindar, 'A Panegyric on Tea', in *Works*, IV, p. 39.

<sup>624</sup> Hutcheson, p. 9 (author's italics).

obvious impropriety, that we imagine ourselves incapable of such mistakes as the alluder seemingly falls into; so that in this case too, there is an imagined superiority [...] We often laugh at such allusion, when we are conscious, that the persons who raised the laugh knows abundantly the justest propriety of speaking, and knows [...] the oddness and impropriety of his own allusion as well as any in company; nay, laughs at it himself: we often admire his wit in such allusions, and study to imitate him in it.<sup>625</sup>

Consequently, there are two ways to interpret Pindar's parodying of the Imperial odes, in which he presents the Emperor as the allusion to the great writer. Firstly, that he disagrees with Hutcheson and, instead, exploits for humorous purpose the imagined superiority of the reader above the Chinese as well as the imagined and laughable notion of placing the Emperor above other poets. Secondly, and even less comfortably considering the implication of racial and cultural superiority, that Pindar agrees with Hutcheson's point that 'some ingenuity in dogs and monkeys, which comes near to some of our own arts, very often makes us merry'.<sup>626</sup>

The attraction of dressing up as the text as Chinese may have been stimulated by the declaration in the real letter from Kien Long that:

As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty and cannot possibly be entertained. It is true that Europeans, in the service of the dynasty, have been permitted to live at Peking, *but they are compelled to adopt Chinese dress*, they are strictly confined to their own precincts and are never permitted to return home.<sup>627</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Hutcheson denies that imagined superiority moves laughter, noting not only the desire to imitate the successful parodist, but also that 'if we observe pain while we are at ease, we are in greater danger of weeping than laughing' (p. 11).

<sup>626</sup> Hutcheson, p. 11.

<sup>627</sup> Emperor Qian Long's Letter to King George III, 1793, quoted in E. Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking*, pp. 322-331.

The Emperor envisages people as objects to be dressed and placed to serve the Empire, to be controlled and subsumed into the Chinese way of being. It is very different from the British idea of exporting ideas and things to other potential colonies, as the Emperor does not countenance hybridity and mutual existence, but sublimation alone.

The Emperor continues:

Supposing that your Envoy should come to our Court, his language and national dress differ from that of our people, and there would be no place in which to bestow him. It may be suggested that he might imitate the Europeans permanently resident in Peking and *adopt the dress and customs of China*, but, it has never been our dynasty's wish to force people to do things unseemly and inconvenient. Besides, supposing I sent an Ambassador to reside in your country, how could you possibly make for him the requisite arrangements? Europe consists of many other nations besides your own: if each and all demanded *to be represented at our Court*, how could we possibly consent? The thing is utterly impracticable. How can our dynasty alter its whole procedure and system of etiquette, established for more than a century, in order to meet your individual views?<sup>628</sup>

The Imperial problem with cross-cultural representation is defined by the Chinese court's resistance to tolerating difference, which is marked by clothes and language. The Chinese identify clothes as signs to be read: adopting Chinese dress codes the behaviour and interaction as belonging to Chinese court culture.<sup>629</sup> The Chinese Emperor's declaration also implies a presumed cultural superiority of the Chinese to which other nations are to bend. By recasting the Emperor as a

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid. (My italics).

<sup>629</sup> For further details about the Chinese perspective of the British, see James Louis Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).



gormandising bon vivant who writes cumbersome and weak verse, Pindar dismantles the Chinese presumption of superiority.<sup>630</sup>

Furthermore, Pindar is declaring his mastery of costume: he can wear the dress of a Chinese lightly and cast it off readily. This loose association is explored in the final poem of the tripartite series, entitled “An Ode to Coffee, in the Style of Kien Long”. “An Ode to Coffee” represents the apex of Pindar’s playfulness and performance, as the process of making coffee becomes an extended metaphor for writing satire. By late eighteenth-century standards, Imperial fixation on tea renders the Emperor effeminate for, as Kowaleski-Wallace has observed, ‘rituals of the tea-table dictated a female preoccupation’.<sup>631</sup>

The coffee-house was a well-established bastion of masculine sociability: as early as 1726, César de Saussure, the Swiss traveller, wrote: ‘All Englishmen are great newsmongers. Workmen habitually begin the day by going to coffee-rooms to read the latest news [...] Nothing is more entertaining than hearing men of this class discussing politics and news about royalty.’<sup>632</sup> The metaphor of coffee making becomes an appropriate vehicle as Pindar presents satire as a commodity that serves to process the unpalatable, the raw coffee, into a consumable form, as

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<sup>630</sup> This idea of the conflict of dress codes evokes the comments made by Hutcheson in *Reflections upon Laughter* (1750 edn.), although Hutcheson concedes to liberal toleration for ‘in the more polite nations, there are certain modes of dress, behaviour, ceremony, generally received by all the better sort, as they are commonly called: to these modes, ideas of decency, grandeur and dignity are generally joined; hence men are fond of imitating the mode: and if in any polite assembly, a contrary dress, behaviour, or ceremony appear, to which we have joined in our country the contrary ideas of meanness, rusticity, sullenness, a laugh does ordinarily arise, or a disposition to it, in those who have not the thorough good breeding, or reflection to restrain themselves, or break through these customary associations. And hence we may see, that what is counted ridiculous in one age or nation, may not be so in another.’ Hutcheson, p. 24.

<sup>631</sup> Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, ‘Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century England’, p. 154. See also Markman Ellis, *Tea and the Tea Table in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010).

<sup>632</sup> Quoted in John Wardroper, *Kings, Lords and Wicked Libellers: Satire and Protest 1760–1837* (London: John Murray, 1973). See D. Kerr, “Satire is Bad Trade’: Dr John Wolcot and his Publishers and Printers in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text*, 12 (Summer 2004): 29–61. <[www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/journals/corvey/articles/cc12\\_n02.pdf](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/journals/corvey/articles/cc12_n02.pdf)> [Accessed 20 June 2012]. Kerr extends this point with supporting evidence from Roy Porter, citing ‘the English [are] extraordinarily politically well informed and attentive’ and Joseph Addison’s ‘nation of statesmen’. Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 1982), pp. 118–119.

well as glorying satire's metaphorical ability to disturb ('shake') and destroy ('crush').

The transition to a poem 'in the style' of the Emperor reflects Pindar's opening statement in *Pindariana*, addressed to the reader, in which he declares 'O Versatility, I hold thee dear: The *Proteus* power be mine, to take each shape; Skip like a Will-o'-wisp; be here, be there'. Pindar views himself and his poetry as shape shifting, which is reflected in his declaration that 'various will be the Subjects of the Muse; Ode, Elegy, Fable, Tale, Ballad, Epigram &c. A version [...] of parts of the venerable Classics, whose spirit has been but feebly transfused through our modern languages will be given'.<sup>633</sup>

Pindar's poetry is chameleonic, drawing from and abusing all forms of poetry. Similarly, he suggests:

No order will be observed with respect to the various Pieces. Thou wilt receive them as they leap from the Portfolio; so that there will subsist as little connection between one and another as between [...] Sir Joseph Banks and Philosophy, Sir William Hamilton and the Secrets of Mount Vesuvius, Judge Kenyon and a *whole* Bottle of Port, Judge Buller and Reprieve.<sup>634</sup>

The comparison with the listed luminaries suggests that Pindar is actually presenting the poems in artful disarray.

The reference to sleep creates a very subtle and well-hidden joke, as it renders as inept and discordant Kien Long's soporific reaction to writing and Blagdon's ability to reduce his audience to slumber:

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<sup>633</sup> Pindar, *Pindariana*, *Works*, IV, p. 6. Pindar is quite comfortable with others' outright fraud: in response to Samuel Johnson's the Ossian controversy, the author of which Johnson declared 'a mountebank, a liar, and a fraud, and that the poems were forgeries', Pindar writes in the introductory address to the readers of *Pindariana* his view of 'the blaspheming Doctor Johnson, with his oracular and growling pomposity... [who criticised] the sublime Ossian'. Johnson quoted in Magnus Magnusson, *Fakers, Forgers & Phoney: Famous Scams and Scamps* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2006), p. 340.

<sup>634</sup> *Pindariana*, in *Works*, IV, p. 8.

Now on Sir Joseph Banks I ponder,  
And now at his rare merit wonder,  
In flies and tadpoles deep;  
And now to many a drowsy head  
I hear the drowsy Blagdon\* read,  
And then I fall asleep.

\* Sir Joseph's right hand, and Secretary to the Royal Society;  
who has very often read the very respectable meetings of the  
Royal Society to slumber.<sup>635</sup>

In the introduction to *Pindariana*, Pindar acknowledges the gap between translation and the transmutations that occur: 'oaks so lofty [...] are changed to paltry broomsticks by translation: Their Pyramids, a little Village Spire [...] A Rill, their Oceans that no longer roar'.<sup>636</sup> This reference to a rill, or small stream, links the statement to the pretend translation of the "Panegyric on Tea", acknowledging the reductive nature of the series of poems as grandeur is reduced to a trickle. The epigram that opens the *Pindariana*, 'non satis est, pulcra esse poemata' [It is not enough for poetry to be beautiful'], from Horace's *Ars Poetica* (18 B.C.). It guides the reader to a contradictory position:

It is not enough for poems to be 'beautiful'; they must also yield  
delight and guide the listener's spirit wherever they wish [...] If  
you speak ineptly assigned words, I shall either sleep or laugh [...] if  
your speeches are out of harmony with your feelings, I shall  
either fall asleep or burst out laughing [...] It is difficult to speak  
uniquely of common themes [...] Material in the public domain  
will come under private jurisdiction if you do not loiter around the  
broad, common poetic cycle, and do not strive, as a literal  
translator, to render texts word for word, and if you will not, as an

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>636</sup> 'Introduction', *Pindariana*, p. 7.

imitator, leap down into a narrow space from where shame or the rules applying to the work forbid you to extricate your foot.<sup>637</sup>

There is some utility in moving beyond the use solely of the idea of translation in the discussion and analysis of the process by which a Chinese text is rendered into English. The etymology of translation is from the Latin *translatus*, the past participle of *transferre*, ‘to bring or carry over’, affirming the relationship between translation and movement across geographical, ideological and cultural gaps. The climax of all such potential for travel, exchange and mutability, whether literal or metaphorical, is the possibility for the emergence of something novel that transcends the bind of stable origins. It communicates the distance, whether abstract or actual, navigated by a travelling text, and also the potential for alteration and, perhaps, sublimation in the process of negotiating between alterity and familiarity.

Pindar undertakes such a negotiation from alterity to familiarity in the process of translation and transmutation between ‘A Panegyric on Tea’ and “Ode to Coffee”. Whilst the Emperor’s poem serves as a sensory experience valorising the ritual of tea drinking, referencing unknown gods and ancients, Pindar presents coffee drinking as an inspirational experience which is located in and bound by contemporary issues, rather than the Imperial fantasy of ‘the famous Ou-tsuen, whose only nourishment was the fruit of the pine [...] [and] the virtuous Lin-fou, bending into form, with his own hands, the branches of the mei-hoa-chou’.<sup>638</sup> By contrast, Pindar is more like a hound upon the scent, ‘Keeping my nose upon the steam / On HASTINGS now my senses work; / And now on virtuous EDMUND BURKE’.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Horace, ‘*Ars poetica* or The Art of Poetry: an Epistle to the Pisos’, trans. by Leon Golden, *Horace for Students of Literature: The ‘Ars Poetica’ and Its Tradition* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995).

<sup>638</sup> Pere Amiot, *Eloge de La Ville de Moukden et de Ses Environs* (1770). My colleagues who are native Chinese speakers do not recognise the names or sounds that the words are attempting to recreate, suggesting that the transliteration has failed. With thanks to Emily Wong and Joyce Lau for their assistance.

<sup>639</sup> ‘Ode to Coffee’, *Works*, IV, p. 40.

The subjects of his poem are all connected with nascent empire building and exploration of the East: Hastings, Burke and Joseph Banks. As the poem declares in the opening line, ‘Delicious Berry, but, ah ! best / When from the eastern Ind, not West’, referring to the secession of the western imperial interests, America and the West Indies, to India and China. Pindar adopts a position contrary to that of the British government during the trial of Warren Hastings, as he presents Hasting’s legal counsel of Edward Law, Sir Thomas Plumer and Sir Robert Dallas escaping justice as ‘virtuous Edmund Burke... let Sir Thomas 'scape’.<sup>640</sup>

Government interference in the trial ultimately resulted in the House of Lords administering justice by ‘Committee of the Whole’ and, on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1795, the Lords voted down the sixteen charges and so acquitted Hastings. Pindar is shocked by the government’s interference during the trial of Warren Hastings, declaring, ‘And then unto myself I say / ‘Is honour dead ? ah, well-a-day !’ / And then my mouth begins to gape’.<sup>641</sup>

Pindar’s final engagement with the satirical representation of China and the Emperor occurred in 1817, two years before his death, in response to the Amherst Embassy, as he published ‘A Contest of Legs; or Diplomats in China’ and ‘A Most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China’. The Amherst Embassy followed a similar pattern to the Macartney one, but this time relations soured quicker and more strongly and resulted in the expulsion of the British and Amherst’s ship firing upon the coast of China.

In the epistle, Pindar addresses the ‘Descendent of the great Kien Long / Immortal for his lyric song / The PETER PINDAR of the *China* Bards’, showing his wry

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<sup>640</sup> Ibid.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., p. 41. Heringman supports the idea of Pindar as a satirist with universal rather than specific targets, as he notes, ‘Persistent attempts to dismiss him as a hireling of the Foxite Whigs were confounded by his openly declared Toryism and eventually by his rebukes to Thomas Paine and occasional anti-Gallic fervor’. Noah Heringman, ‘“Manlius to Peter Pindar”: Satire, Patriotism, and Masculinity in the 1790s’, *Romantic Circles: Romanticism and Patriotism: Nation, Empire, Bodies, Rhetoric*, 29 (University of Maryland, May 2006)  
[http://romantic.arhu.umd.edu/praxis/patriotism/heringman/heringman\\_essay.html](http://romantic.arhu.umd.edu/praxis/patriotism/heringman/heringman_essay.html)  
 [Accessed 12 September 2012]

warmth for the deceased Imperial poet.<sup>642</sup> A paradigm shift occurs between his poems of 1792 and 1794 and that of 1817: by 1817, Pindar has little affection left for the Chinese system and their perception of greatness.

Pindar's earlier lack of faith in the British Establishment is replaced by a soaring patriotism buoyed by the triumphs against Napoleon and the perceived dominance of the British Navy over the seas. The structure of 'A most solemn epistle to the Emperor of China' reflects this changing attitude, beginning with a statement of former admiration, coloured by a waning anxiety about the loss of British identity: 'Know, we were growing all *Chinese*— Nought but the eastern style could please'.<sup>643</sup> In particular, Pindar was disgusted by what he perceived to be the grotesque revival of the Chinoiserie aesthetic at Brighton Pavilion, as he demands, 'Witness the glittering gold Pavilion rooms; here (for the noses of the Great, His HIGHNESS may vouchsafe to treat) Snakes of a size enormous puff perfumes'.<sup>644</sup> Pindar is referring to the sensory overload that party-goers enjoyed at Brighton Pavilion, in which the designs were intended to confuse and befuddle, with deep carpets, intense colours and incense, but also, it is implied, drugs, particularly opium. All of this Pindar derides as 'gaudy trash', executed by 'That Man of merit, Master NASH... Who, for his Oriental style, Has gain'd his PRINCE'S gracious smile, Had swell'd from CARLTON-HOUSE a Mandarin'.<sup>645</sup> The Prince Regent is akin to the gluttonous and indolent Emperor in Gilray's cartoon, which never reflected the real Imperial figure but seemed much more like the corpulent Prince of W(h)ales.

Pindar describes a nation that had been transformed on every level as gardens, music, transport, theatre, fashion had been over-run by the obsession with the Chinese taste:

Our rivers had been fill'd with junks,

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<sup>642</sup> *A Most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1817), p. 5.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Our groves with DRURY'S playful punks...  
 Our Beaux, in spite of Satire's hoots,  
 Had pull'd their beards out by the roots—  
 To please the Court, well pleas'd to play the fool;  
 Then, with a pretty smooth smock face,  
 The flow'ry walks of Pleasure pace—  
 Resembling more Miss MOLLY, than JOHN BULL.  
 Our Music too had chang'd its taste [...]  
 Emitting [...]  
 Tremendous solos from the mighty *Gong*!<sup>646</sup>

For the first time, Pindar adopts popular criticism of the Oriental as a feminising threat. Chinese dress results in transvestism, replacing John Bull, that masculine symbol of nationhood, with a whore. It implies that the adoption has been too literal, complete and unquestioned, unlike Pindar's own playful and lightly worn disguises as a protean poet who believes his purpose is to scrutinise and hold others to account. The poem presents the British as spoiled and spurned, 'feel[ing] so sore', bitterly declaring, 'Lanterns and bells will charm no more [...]' [Chambers's] fam'd Pagoda rais'd at KEW Delight no more a Royal view'.<sup>647</sup> Pindar imagines Amherst's ships returning in 'deep mourning' as 'distressful objects of a dire derision, Returning with the blush of shame for England's darken'd sun of fame'.<sup>648</sup>

Still, a paradigm shift occurs as Pindar sheds the self-pitying expression of loss and shame in order to declare to the Imperial recipient:

Thou never didst vouchsafe [...]  
 To cast thine eye sublime on Maps;  
 And [...] fancying thyself all-mighty,  
 Hast treated us with pompous scorn—  
 Insulted by a *Chinese* crew,

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<sup>646</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

Thou knowest what ONE ship dar'd do,  
 Which, blazing, seem'd to emulate ALGIERS;  
 Which, for Old ENGLAND'S glory fir'd,  
 Blew, with a patriot rage inspir'd,  
 Walls, guns, and lanterns, all about their ears.  
 Reflect, what BRITONS can perform;  
 Of FRANCE who fac'd the hostile storm,  
 (France that on Realms had fix'd her tyger paws);  
 Then chain'd, his ruthless rage to mock,  
 NAPOLEON to a barren Rock.<sup>649</sup>

The reference to Algiers recalls the outcome of another diplomatic mission, led by Edward Pellew, the 1st Viscount of Exmouth, who had tried to negotiate with the Algerian Deys to halt the capture and trade in Christian slaves and to end their piracy. The growing confidence of the British as a global negotiator and force had been building since the official, if not actual, ending of the slave trade in 1807 and the success against Napoleon.<sup>650</sup> When the agreement was nullified by the massacre by the Algerians of about two hundred European fishermen, who were under the protection of the British, Exmouth was ordered to take action against the Algerians and bombarded the Algerian coast for nine hours.

In a sleight of hand, Exmouth negotiated with the Dey to cease the bombardment, falsely threatening to continue destroying their fleet and defences, which in reality was impossible, as the British had run out of ammunition. It proved successful and the Dey agreed to all the terms presented by the British.<sup>651</sup> Pindar reflects in his poem this growing belief in British maritime and martial might, regarding a new dawn in which monarchs are irrelevant, pampered and indulgent. According to Pindar, the real strength of a nation was located in the military, who now were

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<sup>649</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-18.

<sup>650</sup> The Egyptian Abraham Salamé praised the British for their efforts in ending the slave trade, before commencing in an account that glorified British action off the coast of Algiers in *A narrative of the expedition to Algiers in the year 1816, under the command of [...] Admiral Lord Viscount Exmouth* (London: J. Murray, 1819).

<sup>651</sup> See Roger Perkins, *Gunfire in Barbary* (London: Kenneth Mason Publications Ltd, 1982).



superceding the eighteenth-century merchant empire builders of the East India Company.

Pindar's belief in the plebian forces, strengthened by the increasing popularity in the idea of citizens' rights, are encapsulated by his final lines as he rejects outright the idea of creeping acquiescence or that Britain should mould to the etiquette and desires of the Chinese court: 'Kings are ambitious of my song; / But mark, Successor of KIEN LONG, / First mend *thy* manners, ere thou gain'st *my* praise'.<sup>652</sup> The words represent the evolution from a poet who was accused by contemporaries of 'los[ing] the monarch in the man' to one in which the monarch is not just re-humanised but subordinate to the ordinary man, here a satirical poet.<sup>653</sup>

### Conclusion

Both Chambers and Pindar held agendas facilitated by laughter. Chambers's work was a deliberate attempt to market a particular opinion on the aesthetics of gardening, resulting in a robust reaction from the poetical satirist William Mason in his 'Heroic Epistle', and a rebuttal and counter-rebuttal which not only surprised the original author but also asserts the importance of satirical poetry as an eighteenth-century form of commentary, debate and exchange.

Chambers, pretending to be the Chinese man Tan Chet-Qua, offers a dissection of gardening practice, in the hope of informing and inspiring British gardeners to integrate new methods. He dressed up as Chinese his own new philosophy, which was critical of the prevailing Brownian tastes, as a form of shield against attack. The disguise also served as a marker of his philosophy of the mind and imagination, added to the second edition of the *Treatise on Oriental Gardening* when the first edition, he felt, demanded further explanation.

Chambers's idea of Chinese gardens proves to be a performance by presenting his own gardening aesthetic dressed up as Chinese. As an author, he was not

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<sup>652</sup> *A Most Solemn Epistle to the Emperor of China* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1817), 19.

<sup>653</sup> 'The Two Pindars, or, A Hint to Apollo' [by G. B. R.] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 57 (1787): 818.

attempting to embrace the exotically unfamiliar; instead, he was trying to ensure the reader embraced an unfamiliar system of gardening by creating psychological recognition through pretended mimicry. Unsurprisingly, considering his profession, Chambers's text is not an explicitly comic one but instead is marked by a lightness of touch and tone, whereas Peter Pindar's satirical poems, with fake translations of pretend Chinese Imperial poems and imagined dialogues with the Emperor of China, are stridently and savagely comic. Chambers's creation was not representative of philosophical naivety but philosophical creativity.

There are brief moments of innocent, apparent unknowingness, as Tan Chet-Qua declares, 'Another favourite word of your virtuosi, is purity; a word of which, being a stranger, I do not perhaps know the full value; nor exactly in what sense it is applied to the art in question'.<sup>654</sup> This is faux-naivety, for Tan Chet-Qua continues to describe how the obsession with purity has led to gardens being 'purged [...] freed of every encumbrance [sic], and cleaned of every extrinsic redundancy' (148). These words summon, with vitriol, a vision of the Brownist aesthetic; the ventriloquisation offers not naive comment, but a shield from behind which acerbic criticism may be poured. This is very different from the laughter aimed at Goldsmith's *Altangi*, whose naivety leads to misreadings such as his misinterpretation of thieving prostitutes as friendly ladies. Instead, Chambers savages Brownist gardening, in the guise of Tan Chet-Qua.

Writing immediately preceding and after the largely failing Macartney Embassy to China, Pindar's work reveals the significance of his role as popular commentator on current events and issues, charting his cooling attitude to China. Pindar's poetry reflects the paradigm shift that occurs between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Embassies. In the 'Ode in the style of Kien Long', with the absurd representations of Blagdon and Banks as well as the Chinese Emperor, Pindar reveals an even-handed distribution of his violent reaction to the inadequacies of elites. The juxtaposition of the inward-looking and self-absorbed Emperor and the outward-looking and concerned Pindar reflects the impression China gave of an unwillingness to engage with the outside world, but the coercive

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<sup>654</sup> Chambers, *An Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-Qua, of Quang-Chew-Fug gent*, ed. by Richard E. Quaintance (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1978), p. 147.

nature of satire is universally applied. As the poet William Combe suggests, satire ought to ‘direct its shaft to known persons and characters, by whom general severities would be scarcely felt [...] [holding] them forth to the immediate and certain odium of their fellow creatures’.<sup>655</sup> Likewise, Thomas Mathias argues that ‘all publick men, distinguished, must in their turns submit to [satire], if necessary to the welfare of the state [...] it must come home to the bosoms, and often to the offences of particular men’.<sup>656</sup> Pindar utilises a satirical translation of eastern literature as way of processing, or translating, recent events connected to the east. Pindar inverts Chinese literary conventions of reverence whilst disavowing the western impulse to mimic eastern styles.

Contrastingly, whilst Chambers may be using ‘mimicry [as]... a form of psychological recognition, a way of embracing, quite literally, the unfamiliar’, his confession of his disguise in the preface of the second edition demonstrates his discomfort with mimicking too successfully.<sup>657</sup> A text dressed as Chinese necessitates a semi-opaque mantle of Chineseness that the reader could penetrate; it should not be impermeable. As Ulrich Broich argues:

The concept of disguise (and the related one of stylisation) is a fundamental principle [...] A principle that corresponds to the stylised deportment of contemporary high society, together with its predilection for masquerades [...]. Styled and disguised by the cloak of poetic diction [...] In many cases this is a deliberate game the author plays with his reader, and without a doubt most authors expected their readers to recognise the allusions and see through the disguises. But this game of hide and seek takes on deeper significance when one realises that this was the way in whichever poets were able at least to seem as if they were obeying the rules of poetics.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> William Combe, *The Justification: A Poem* (London: J. Bew, 1777), p. ii.

<sup>656</sup> Thomas Mathias, ‘Introductory Letter’, *The Pursuits of Literature* (London: J. Owen, 1794), p. 6.

<sup>657</sup> Castle, *Masquerade*, p. 62.

<sup>658</sup> Ulrich Broich, *The Eighteenth-century Mock-heroic Poem*, p. 41.

Chambers and Pindar adopt Chinese mantles underscored by doubleness: disguise offers a commentary upon truth and authenticity; irony becomes ironised; light verse and lightness of touch combine with heavy criticism and serious comment. Both Chambers and Pindar critique the popularity of China and the Chinese taste, yet published to exploit the vogue. They employ this literary doubleness to different ends. In Pindar's work, the gap between the quality of some of his satirical and that of his lyrical poetry implies a conscious decision to write in an inferior style. There is doubleness in his humour of superiority: there is the class superiority of an emperor above a satirical poet who was originally a country doctor, and the cultural superiority of a skilled professional lyricist as opposed to the amateur foreign poet who possesses none of the classical literary heritage of the European writer.

Pindar rejects attempts at authenticity: he views the gap between the Chinese text and the western translation as one to be exploited, not at the sole cost of the Oriental original, but to ridicule all forms associated with imperialism, whether Chinese or nascent British, and the Establishment. Pindar casts himself as an alter-ambassador, with his own communications with China and his interpretation of the response. Ultimately, Pindar affords the Chinese Emperor the same notice as British Royals, and attributes similar failings of ignorance, pomposity and indulgence. The satirical pen is an equaliser, collapsing boundaries of distance and alienation by recognising universal and base humanity.

Pindar does not focus on race, or racial difference, in the way in which Chambers does, but instead on the inadequacies and problems of misrule. He achieves what Nokes describes as 'a form of literary alchemy turning local heroes[...] into universal types and icons'.<sup>659</sup> Here, it is a hero local to China who serves as a universal type in order to dismantle the veneer of monarchy to reveal the imperfection of man. The democratising force of satire has placed the ordinary man in a position of power: those who kowtow to the new King George are mere mandarins, mirroring the monarchical rule of China, which Peter perceives as ossifying while England rises. Pindar regards a new age and a clear move away

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<sup>659</sup> Nokes, *Raillery and Rage*, p. 4.

from autocracy for, although it is ‘hard to make a King a man’, in a display of the power of the pen, Pindar’s satire has rendered not one but two kings, on either side of the world, as mere men.<sup>660</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Arguably, Pindar is building on the satirical criticisms against government published by the pseudonymous Junius. See Francesco Cordasco, *A Bibliography of the Letters of Junius with a Checklist of Juniuan Scholarship and Related Studies* (Fairview: Junius-Vaughn Press, 1986).

## Thesis Conclusion

The adoption of a Chinese mantle reflects the ludic nature of eighteenth-century methods of understanding and encapsulates the imperfections and ambivalences of cross-cultural contact. The Chinese mantle and mantelpiece decoration gives an alternative discourse of extra-colonial interaction that draws on and challenges established pre- and post-colonial theories. My thesis contributes to the understanding of early attitudes to the Imperial project and concomitant anxieties and ambivalences engendered by global exploration. It reinforces and extends the country house as a site of multiple and competing ideologies, connected not only to gender relationships and issues of nationhood, but to further issues of science, consumption, luxury, cosmopolitanism, civilisation and imperialism. At the same time, I have drawn attention to particular networks of exchange which highlight the methods of production and dissemination of knowledge.

The adoption of the Chinese mantle reveals not just the individual experience of nationhood, but the female experience of domesticating and performing Empire, in which the home becomes a microcosm of the Imperial project in which women may participate actively. The Chinese mantle encapsulates the heterogeneity of people's engagement with China, dressing up rooms, bodies and texts in various ways and utilising different aspects of Chineseness in the process. Furthermore, the adoption of a Chinese mantle represents an eighteenth-century method of negotiating cultural value, particularly of the Chinese taste. Added to this, the adoption of a Chinese mantle offered eighteenth-century people a method of exploring the union of the dissimilar. Both the authentic and the inauthentic, Chinese objects and China itself, in its geographical and socio-cultural distance and its simultaneous proximity through objects on the mantelpiece, was a between-place: known and unknown; distant yet domestic. It was, simultaneously, vast and Imperial China and small and fragile china. These are not simple binaries, as China represented all of these versions of China, and more.

The material metonymies imported into English environments created a metonymic gap: the objects become synecdochic of the original culture, whilst complexities of interpretation created a gap between place of origin and place of

display. Because China was seen as an alternative, alien but recognisably civilised culture, this liminal gap became a location for intercultural exchange. Jones and the Bankses regarded this point of exchange as uniting the best of cultures and technologies in a process of ultimate advancement. Cross-cultural influences shaped the techniques and styles in which texts and artworks were being produced, resulting in new methods and media for production, whilst the mode and nature of collecting offers a way of reading the tensions and multiplicities of Occidental-Oriental interaction. It demonstrates an urge to understand and to memorialise, an outward-looking gaze that provokes thinking and analysis, whilst simultaneously offering a means of solipsism and introspection.

Montagu, Yorke and Banks exhibit an awareness and self-consciousness that challenges the literary representations of such gentlewomen and their attitudes to foreign goods. Each woman had a highly individualised relationship with her objects and with the foreignness that they embodied. Each had her own response to the commercialisation of Chinese products and offered something more nuanced in their engagement with commerce and China than perhaps is allowed for by contemporary commentators such as Goldsmith or Booker. What unites Montagu, Banks, Yorke and, to a certain degree, Chambers, is the way in which adopting a Chinese mantle has multiple and complex effects on the spatial field of the country house. The study of mantling opens up the possibility of the country house as microcosm not just of nation but of culture, and its relationship to globalism, which could offer new seams of research, particularly in conjunction with the study of a woman's place and her contested status in the home. When literary, textual and material culture are brought together, deeper readings of decorative surfaces emerge. The ideology of ornamentation, which shaped attitudes to dress, speech, and interior decoration through the dualism of eclecticism and selection, was thus complicated by the ideological tensions introduced by the Chinese taste.

Montagu disregarded the pursuit of authenticity and instead played with and laughed at the frivolity of the Chinese taste; she laughingly adopted the aesthetically challenging 'fat idol with the scone upon his head' whilst bringing

together a melange of pieces from different cultures. The buddha figure with a candle holder attached to his head is an adaptation of a Chinese piece or an adapted simulacrum of Chinese decoration, or what Lady Banks would consider fake. Montagu regarded ugliness or challenging visual juxtapositions for their ability to confront aesthetic and cultural European norms, particularly the Neo-Classical, and to create an elite performance of socialisation and amusement derived from a contested site, which in turn was heightened by the sensory overload of the Europeanised Oriental decorative taste. Montagu was suspicious of the influence of Oriental taste and did not share the Banks family's view of the ameliorating potential of Chinese imports. Nevertheless, she enjoyed its associated controversy and the way in which it impacted upon space and dress, as well as the liberation from fixity of meaning that novelty and foreignness inspired. Because the origin of Chinese ware was so distant and unknown, Montagu could mix, inscribe meaning upon and juxtapose freely different objects.

Tension existed in the Chinese objects: a thing functioned as a sign signifying an Other, or the narrative of an Other but equally, because of the distance and unknowability of that Other, left the interpretation of the signification open and unlimited. This permitted Montagu to indulge in what Hugh Honour summarises as the 'vision of Cathay', which expounds the view that unknownness of the Far East allowed Europeans to inscribe their own visions of an exotic China.<sup>1</sup> Contrastingly, in the 'Dairy Book', such uncertainty and openness when confronted with an object-sign that so clearly seemed to signify something particular, as in the case of porcelain, is a source of frustration. For Lady Banks, unknowability and the fantasy of knowing stimulated scholarly curiosity.

Whereas Montagu mocks the more literal Oriental mantles adopted by herself and some of her acquaintances and openly played with the notion of Oriental authenticity, Lady Banks, so focussed upon the legitimacy and heritage of her pieces, presents an entirely different mantle: that of the researcher and expert. Whilst Montagu strove to point out that her essential self could never be truly mistaken for a 'Josse', Lady Banks was negotiating another, more intricate and less playful interplay of identities, between the good wife and the expert.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: A Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961).



Both women reveal an awareness and self-consciousness that pierce the literary representations of such aristocratic women and their attitudes to foreign goods and demonstrate the highly individualised relationship that each woman had with her objects and with the foreignness that they embodied. Each has her own response to the commercialisation of Chinese products and both offer something more nuanced in their engagement with commerce and China than perhaps is allowed for by contemporary comment.

Montagu and Banks also perceived the relationship between the Classical or Neo-Classical and the Oriental very differently. The former regarded them from an aesthetic perspective, viewing them as competing tastes in which one must wane whilst the other waxes. Lady Banks regards these aesthetics as possessing the potential for hybridity and intercultural and intermaterial influence: one form of manufacture in one part of the world could affect and improve the other, and each bring strengths and expertise of its own to create a superior product.

The instability of the 'Dairy Book', updated, edited, and altered, and the interplay and interpolation within and between the two versions of the texts, reveals the dynamic acquisition of knowledge through exchange of information with others and collecting information from various sources. The 'Dairy Book' offers a refutation of the negative response to women's collecting habits and evidence of the delicate harnessing of propriety and appropriateness with intellectual curiosity in one woman's careful interaction with enlightenment intellectuals. The 'Dairy Book' controverts the position of popular literary culture which characterised female collecting culture as unenlightened ignorance and naivety and, at worst, pejorative to the state of the nation; the tract's defensiveness confirms the existence of those negative views. In this way, it highlights the precarious position of women in society: compelled to focus upon the home, but also limited in her choice of endeavour within that space, a woman could easily transgress expected behaviours through an ill-chosen mantle adornment, which could reveal a lack of patriotism as well as of taste and restraint.

The record of the 'Dairy Book' demonstrates the Bankses vision of intersection between commerce and consumption and the vital role that women played in this

relationship. Lady and Joseph Banks appropriated aspects of china and China as part of furthering the Enlightenment project: advancing knowledge and using and creating networks of like-minded individuals.

William Jones likewise offered a novel mode of producing and disseminating knowledge about distant China by re-imagining the location of production and dissemination and using, or desiring to use, native expertise and the knowledge of those on-site in China. He advanced the idea of bringing together different linguistic heritages in order to enrich and diversify English literature. Although Jones's metaphor for translation of dressing texts as English, inverting the adoption of Chinese dress, foreshadows Bhabha's uneasy sentiments about the pejorative aspect of mimesis, by avoiding a discourse of superiority and by advocating that English writers may learn from other languages and histories, Jones presents an ameliorating vision of mimetic value.

In a similar manner, Chambers and Pindar use the destabilising nature of mimicry to challenge convention, although they were challenging the rules of gardening and the standard social expectation of deference and politeness towards authority figures, which satirists delighted in resisting. They employed varying degrees of humour in the adoption of their Chinese mantles. Lord Shaftesbury, earlier in the century, suggested:

The natural free spirits of ingenious men, if imprisoned or controlled, will find out other ways of motion to relieve themselves in their constraint; and whether it be in burlesque, mimicry, or buffoonery, they will be glad at any rate to vent themselves, and be revenged upon their constrainers.<sup>2</sup>

His perspective on humour points to the anarchic nature of mimicry and the way in which it can be a form of destabilisation of convention and normalcy; however, to identify anarchic tendencies does not necessarily suggest a lack of direction, intent or purpose. Whilst it is both explanation for and an uncomfortable

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<sup>2</sup> Shaftesbury, *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor* (London: Egbert Sanger, 1709), reprinted in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.*, 5th edn, 3 vols (London: John Darby, 1732), I, p. 71.

justification of laughing at otherness, it also conveys a sense of anarchism and resistance that is characterised by the rise in satire and masquerade that represents a significant subsection of eighteenth-century humour.

The ‘exemplary disorder’ of disguise can, in fact, strengthen order: whilst Montagu’s sense of who she is clarified against the material backdrop of her chaotic and fantastical dressing room and outré costume, Chambers proposes a gardening aesthetic that supports the artificial re-creation (and thus the ordering) of the appearance of natural features.<sup>3</sup> He dismantles convention but supplies new order.

However, although masquerades ‘were persistently associated with diabolical foreign influence, imported corruption, the dangerous breach of national boundaries, contamination from without’ (Castle, 7), Chambers and Pindar, in their own ways, like Montagu, resist or control through appropriation this devilish foreignness, the perceived infection or contamination by the other. Humour, like luxury, represented a contested moral arena that was increasingly accommodated: as contact with other cultures accelerated, the discourse of civilisation identified symbols of advanced society and attempted to recast their moral ambiguity as a more certain signifier of sophistication and progression.

The intention of this thesis has been to show the diversity and individuated natures of responses to China, even when a single method of designing and appropriating Chineseness has been invoked. However, the diversity of the case studies has necessarily resulted in much being unexplored or left out. More extensive literary comparisons could draw out in more depth the interaction between literary and material culture, particularly in considering why there are few dramas set in China or translated from Chinese.

In November 2013, Peter J. Kitson will publish *Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange 1760–1840*, in which he adopts a similarly diverse selection of missionaries, diplomats, travellers, traders, and literary men and women during the Romantic period in order to show how British knowledge of

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<sup>3</sup> Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization*, p. 6.

China was constructed from the writings and translations of a diverse range. He too will consider Jane Austen and William Jones, contributing to understanding about the way in which China and ideas about Chineseness influenced the advancement of literary and material culture.

In the continuation of research beyond this thesis, Montagu and Banks could be brought together more strongly with the recent studies of the Duchess Portland's museum to study further the contribution of elite women to the evolution of cultural practices. The East India Company at Home Project, headed by Prof. Margot Finn, is indicative of the current research being done on the home as site of complex cultural and ideological signification, particularly in relation to Empire.

Lady Banks's 'Dairy Book' would benefit from being set into the context of the wider Banks archive and could also be used to further understanding of Wedgwood's studies in porcelain. Stephen Weston's translations of the Imperial poems could be used to further translation studies; his work could also be used to analyse further the parodic translations of Thomas Mathias, Peter Pindar and others. Jones's Chinese studies remain frustratingly curtailed by Jones's unfortunate demise, although this work on both Banks and Jones adds to research on empiricism and observation set out in Daston and Lunbeck's *Histories of Scientific Observation* (2011).<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, Jones's ideas on the breaking of boundaries could be extended further and linked to the modern post-colonial concept of overlap. Whang Atong, who appears repeatedly in the references of many key figures of the Enlightenment, remains an elusive figure and requires an academic capable of tracing the Chinese archives of Atong in order to give a more comprehensive picture of the man. Similar efforts could be exerted in furthering knowledge about the life of Tan-Chit Qua.

This thesis has examined creative and scholarly responses to China and aspects of Chineseness in England, identifying a particular method of appropriation: the adoption of a Chinese mantle, literal and figurative. As evidenced by the three

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<sup>4</sup> Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck, *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

arenas of home, science and satire, and by the individuated nature of the case studies, the adoption of a Chinese mantle offered a method of producing and disseminating knowledge that was playful and imperfect, and in which the knowingness of the fantasy and the fantasy of knowing China challenged received ideas of civilisation and acculturation. Using the heuristic device of the adoption of a Chinese mantle, this thesis has sought an alternative lexis for discussing intercultural contact that was not straightforwardly colonial; indeed, the perception of the Chinese towards the British was of a distant and inferior island race. In addition to being a playful exploration of issues of identity and place, the adoption of the Chinese mantle could also be a tool for enlightenment and exploration and so contribute to the evolution of material and literary culture in the long eighteenth century.

# Appendix

## Section One: Home

### Chapter One: Dressing up as Chinese: Rooms, Bodies, Women and China



Nicholas Lancret, *The Four Times of Day: Morning* (1739)

NG5867. Photo © The National Gallery, London.



William Hogarth, 'The Toilette' from the Marriage A-la-Mode series (1743)

NG116. Photo © The National Gallery, London.





Anon. *The Toilet*: A lady seated at her dressing table, putting a piece of jewellery in her hair while looking in a mirror (London: Robert Sayer, Printseller in Fleet Street, c.1770). BM 1881,1112.266. Image © Trustees of the British Museum





George Bickham, (Jnr.). *The Morning Tost; or Fanny M-'s maid  
Washing her Toes* (1751)

BM 1868,0808.3579. Image © Trustees of the British Museum.



Anon. Unmounted fan-leaf, with a lady at her toilet with attendants, children, monkeys, and a dog; a man enters through a door at right; flowers scattered over the floor; edges and centre made up to extend the image from the fan-leaf to the wood. BM. 1891,0713.712 (Paris, c.1700-1750) Image © Trustees of the British Museum.





*Trade card of John Platt.* [Cabinet and chair maker and upholsterer in Bedford Court, Covent Garden; rococo framework with a Chinese man seated on the left side, a Chinese woman at her toilette on the right side, beside the framework, a large chair to left, a cabinet also decorated with Chinese figures to right.] BM.

Trade cards Heal 28.175 (London: Daryl & Edwards, c.1765)

Image © Trustees of the British Museum.

## Chapter Two

### Two Elizabeths and the Chinese Taste at Erddig



Elizabeth Ratcliffe, *Pagoda*, National Trust Inventory Number 1147091 ©

National Trust / Susanne Gronnow

#### Summary description

Model; Pagoda - An 18th C. model of a Chinese pagoda, in mother-of-pearl, by Elizabeth Ratcliffe, the 5 storeys hung with bells, resting on a rocky base inset with coloured stones and glass; the octagonal platform, inscribed 'Erddigg 1767'; contained in a hexagonal glass panelled case of truncated obelisk form, the lower border carved with interlaced rosettes, resting on the backs of 3 carved and silvered chimera supported by a 3-sided stand, crisply carved at the angles with scrolling foliage, with concave shaped panels of fretted 'Chinese Paling' form painted in green, grey and white on claw and ball feet resting on a circular oak base. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1147091>. [Accessed 5 June 2011]



Elizabeth Ratcliffe, *Temple of the Sun*, National Trust Inventory Number 1147092,  
© National Trust / Susanne Gronnow

#### Summary description

Model; Temple of Sun - An 18th C. model of the ruins of the Temple of Sun at Palmyra, in mother-of-pearl, by Elizabeth Ratcliffe; contained in a contemporary carved, gilt and glazed case on a carved and gilt stand in the full neo-classical tradition, the fluted frieze punctuated by stiff acanthus leaves and an oval patera; the square tapering legs truncated at the tops, with acanthus 'capitals', applied with carved paterae, ribbons and husk garlands. The stand perhaps by Thomas Fentham. Fragment of label on the underside. 'Ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra E.R. 1773'. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1147092>.

[Accessed 5 June 2011]



Elizabeth Ratcliffe, *Bird*, National Trust Inventory Number 1149007

© National Trust / Susanne Gronnow

Model; Bird - An 18th C. mother-of-pearl bird, made by Elizabeth Ratcliffe, the bird perched on flowering trees under a glass domes probably made to rest on the candlestand. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1149007>.

[Accessed 5 June 2011]

## Section Two: Science

### Introduction

#### Scientific Curiosity and China

An example of the type of description popular with the Royal Society, with an emphasis on measurement as a system of controlling the environment.

##### 1. Extract from the Snowdon Hill Experiment

‘Concerning the Torricellian Experiment tried on the top of Snowdon-hill. By Mr. Halley. N° 229, p174-75’. Wednesday, May 26, I was on the top of Snowdon, where I tried the torricellian experiment[...] the air continued, both before and after, in the same state, as I got it verified by Mr. Davis's standing barometer at Llanerch in Denbyshire, about 25 miles east from Snowdon where it was observed during 4 days, to stand from 20.71 to 20.8- inches. Llanerch is about a mile and a half above the town of St. Asaph, about (3 miles from the mouth of the river Llyud, which falls with a rapid stream into the Irish sea; and, consequently, is several feet above its surface[...] I thrice repeated the experiment, and as often found the height of the mercury 26 inches 1. And being come down to Llanberis, at the foot of the hill, about 6 that evening, I as often found it 28.4 inches. A little above... are the principal fountains of the river, that falls into the channel of Anglesey, at Carnarvon, called anciently Segontium, whither we went the next day; and about 8 at evening, found the mercury, by a triple experiment, to stand at 29.9 inches, very near the surface of the sea: when, at the same time, at Llanerch, it was not above 29.7; whence I conclude, that the difference of the air's pressure on the sea, and on the top of Snowdon, is rather more than 3 inches, 8 tenths. I could have wished for one of Mr. Hunt's portable barometers ; which will certainly be accurate enough for taking the levels, for bringing of water from distant places, and certainly much less subject to error; there being a tenth of an inch for each 3.0 yards, which may be divided into many parts evidently. Snowdon was measured by Mr. Caswel, with Adams's instruments, and found to be 1240 yards high; which abating the height of the mercury 3 inches, 8 tenths, may serve for a standard, until a better be obtained on a higher place. From hence the sea dipt everywhere above a degree below us... and we saw Ireland plainly from the W. b. S. to S. W. b. W. and the mountains of Cumberland or Westmoreland very faintly[...] Carnarvonshire and Anglesey lay under us, like a map, affording a very pleasant prospect, were it not for the horrors of the neighbouring precipices.

Hutton, Charles, George Shaw and Richard Pearson, eds., *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, from Their Commencement in 1665 to the Year 1800*, 17 vols (London: Royal Society, 1809), IV, p.174.



## Chapter Four

### Interplay and Interpretation: Lady Banks's 'Dairy Book'



Watercolour illustration of the Journey to Pekin.  
Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre, Kent Archives, MSS Knatchbull  
Papers U951/Z34, Lady Banks's 'Dairy Book'



The following text is quoted in full from a sheaf of paper inserted in the Kent Archives' version of the 'Dairy Book'. It is attached to a Chinese cipher key.

*Observations made in the year 1775 on the Duchess of Portland's  
Collection of Old China by Whang at Tong, a Chinese*

By tracing back the Chinese history from our present year A.D. 1775, and setting forth the Names of the several Emperors; and the years they reigned from the present Emperor. It appears that the first year of the Emperor Shing Fan (when the said China ware was made) was in our year 1459 which shows the aforesaid pieces of China ware to have been made 316 years ago. There are other comments on particular emperors, such as the one on 'Kong Hi' (reigned 1658-1720), 'This Emperor was a Prince of great Learning He published (among many other books) a new Dictionary of the Chinese Language, in his own name, very correctly and neatly printed, and is at this day esteemed the best, This Work, Complete is now in St Johns College Oxford, and was properly arrange by Mr Whang at Tong in the month of June 1775 when he was at Oxford with Mr Blake'. At Tong also comments upon some of the marks of distinction 'Foke', 'A seal character similar to our method of a Cypher, a Round Saucer 2 Birds Crane Neck and Crown Also a Cup with Cover & feet silver Gilt'. Additionally, he describes the 'Kay-ong' mark, which 'signifies Sweet Scented. This a fine Scented Wood, of wch the Duchess dowager of Portland has a fan the sticker whereof are made of this wood.

The following list offers a sample of the description of the porcelain in Lady Banks's collection. Where the piece is described extensively in the body of the thesis, it has been omitted from the following appendix, signalled by the use of ellipses; other ellipses have been employed for clarity or to avoid repetition.

*The list, in order, of the forty pieces described in the collection,  
plus the three pieces added thereafter.*

No. 1 The Journey to Pekin

The Ware is coarse, but the Biscuit is compact and Good, the Painting is not all burned in, color having been laid on upon some parts after the Figures came from the oven, but others of them especially the Blues which are seen on some of the saddle and on the Ladies Ornament hung up on the Palankin are exquisite. the red also on the top of the Palanquin is a deep crimson different from any hue of red seen on the more elegant wares of the Dynasty of Ming [...] From these circumstances it is clear that the Ware is not the produce of King-te-ting, but of some Manufactory which has either ceased to work or with which the Europeans have not any longer a communication.

No. 2 The Battle Jar [...]

No. 3 The Imperial Dishes are called so by Lady Banks because one of them certainly represents the amusements of the Emperor with his women in the Imperial Gardens & the others are with great probability conjectur'd to belong to the same subject [...]

No. 6 Black China is a scarce article among the Collectors, but Lady Banks's Dairy is rich in it [...] The Black Ground of the Bason displays is held in a proper light a variety of prismatic colours but these tho beautiful appear to be no more than an unsuccessful attempt to obtain the clear black ground which the Chinese prefer to all others. [There is a pencilled footnote by Banks to say that is 'much to be feared that these pieces have been through the hands of Dutch counterfeiters'].

No. 7 Lacquered China. The valuable Jars now at Althorpe are of this kind, Lady Banks has a small piece covered entirely with lacquer, in which shining portions of shell cut in figures are mixed which shews exactly the mode in which the Pannels of the Althorpe Jars are ornamented. She has also two middle sized Japan Dishes in the Manufacturer of which the Workmen, aware that Gold appears to more advantage on a lacquered found perhaps than on any other, and that it is never brilliant when laid upon the glaze of China ware [...] these they have covered with Lacquer after the China had been bak'd & have ornamented them richly with Gold, the splendor of which I not to be paralleled & indeed never fails to attract the attention of the most superficial observer who compliments Lady Banks's Dairy by taking a view of it.

No. 8 White China. The Materials of the ancient white are the most costly and the most precious that China produces, this Ware requires no glaze but in a strong fire becomes semivitrified and thus glazes itself, but it cannot be urged into any further stage of vitrification by the greatest force of fire that Europeans have been able to apply to it. A portion only of the white China we meet with is of this original sort, the rest is covered with a white Glaze on a Biscuit not preferable to other Ware, Lord Sudley has two admirable Jars of this China, Lady banks has a small box with a lid and possible some other Piece, as it is not easy to distinguish unless some Chip or breach of the substances lays the Biscuit open to sight!

No. 9 The Mythological Dish is of the most beautiful Green enamel on it are represented the fabulous Bird Foo and the fabulous beast Ki-Lin, Animals beloved by the Chinese [...]

No. 10 The Royal Bowl is of the finest and most ancient Green enamel, ornamented in compartments with figures of a multitude of those imaginary Animals which the inventive genius of the Chinese created for the purpose of doing honor to virtue [...] When his present Majesty accompanied by the Queen and her lovely daughters honored Lady Banks's Dairy with their presence on 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1804, she was permitted to offer a homage of its produce to her august visitors in this Bowl.

No. 11 The Japon (sic) Dragon Bowl is a fair specimen of the pale or red Japon tho not particularly excellent, its curiosity is derived from the Dragon Painted upon it which exactly resembles the Japanese Dragon called Falsdria on Doja in having whiskers [...] and above all in having three claws only. There is a description from Kampfer in of the Imperial symbolism of the dragon holding a jewel, but 'he does not tell us whether or not the use of this Device is prohibited to the People, possibly the Jewel which is wanting in Lady Banks's Dragon constitutes the difference of the Device of the Sovereign from that of the subject.

No. 12 Lady Banks has two basins and two cups ornamented with the Imperial Dragon of China having five claws, they are excellent biscuit and well finished. The right of wearing garments ornamented with five clawed Dragons or with the Bird called Fong-Hoang is by the Laws of China confined to the Emperor and to such persons as are invested by him with this privilege [...] The same circumstances is supposed to take place respecting Vessels of China Ware but for this we have not year any published authority.

No. 13 The butterfly cup. This singular piece has not a foot of any sort to support it if set down. The person who uses it as a drinking cup must of course if he receives it full hold it in his hand till its is emptied. It is painted with irregular figures imitating the Panes of Chinese Windows filled up with pierces of transparent shell of different sizes instead of Glass, in front is a large butterfly and on the sides other smaller ones instead of a handle the famous water Frdon [...] supposed to inhabit the sea and to cause water spouts by whirling itself about is placed upon one side of it [...] Butterflies (sic) are found so beautiful that those who take them never fail to send them to the Emperors Court where they are used in making certain ornaments for the Palace. If the Butterfly in front of this cup is of that sort thus circumstance coupled with its yellow color which no subject can use and the mythological handles, gives some room to suppose that the Cup may have been on of the Utensils of the Imperial Palace at Pekin.

No. 14 The great Blue and White Jars. These Jars were given to Lady Banks by Lord Yarborough, they are of the finest ancient blue and white and exhibit the most perfect manner the four shades of Blue which the Connoisseurs of the last

generation so much admired. Upon it August personages are represented [...] a Lady is seen holding a bunch of these flowers in her hand, as if going to land for the purpose of presenting them to her Sovereigns [...] There are not on any part of these Jars letters or other marks by which their precise age can be determined but from the beauty of the Biscuit and the extreme brilliancy of the blue colour, the materials of which have been long lost in China, no doubt can be entertained of their being the manufactures of the very best times, which seem to have been about the Reign of the Emperor [...] Shin Fan, the 89<sup>th</sup> of the Dynasty of Ming who reigned from the year 1465 to 1488.

No. 15 The Black Kilns. These figures which give a better idea of the taste of the Chinese than any thing else possessed by Lady Banks, are modeled and colored in imitation of Bronze, their mouths are evidently copied from the gaping Jaws of some monstrous fish, their eye balls which imitate those of lobsters or of crabs [...] figures of this kind of bronze are said to be placed by the Chinese on the altars of their public Temples, as well as the private Altars in their Houses [...] in this style but much more distorted appears in the Altar before the Goddess Pulsa in the Plate in Ogilby's Atlas p58.

No. 16. The Dragon Cream Pot. Tho the form of this piece is somewhat similar to the cream Pots now in use in our Potteries the whole appearance of it carries the evident marks of high antiquity' [...]

No. 17 Ancient Coffee Pots. Tho these vessels resemble in some degree in their general design at least the Coffee pots now in use, there can be little doubt of their having been manufactured long before the use of Coffee was introduced into Europe [...] The extreme coarseness of the ware which on a superficial inspection scarce appears to be Porcelain their weight and above all the brilliant ultra marine blues upon them [...] gives to these vessels some pretensions to be of date at least as high as that of the Dynasty of Yuen. It is to be hoped that information will in due time be obtained from China which will enable us better to ascertain the different qualities as well as the dates of manufacture of the excellent specimens of old China which are to be found in this Century.

No. 18 The Chinese Garden. This is of the ancient brown ware which seldom now occurs, Lady Banks has another piece of the same kind of Manufacture which stands near the Garden [...] It represents very roughly a Garden ornamented with Pagodas, Rocks, Dragons etc. behind is a hollow reservoir which feeds to small mountains one of them exhibiting a specimen of that coarse humour to which the Dutch and the Flemings of our time are more addicted than the English or any other of the more polished societies of Europe.

No. 19. The Historical Dish. A size which seldom occurs in China ware tho frequently in Japon. The whole inside is divided into compartments representing as is conjectured either successive scenes in a dramatic Entertainment or the incidents of Adventures of a novel [...]

No. 20 The Shepherdess Plates. Two Plates of the most Perfect eggshell China, representing a Rustic Maiden attending her sheep [...] whether this is the representation of the fair Shepherdess [...] can be only a matter of conjecture, but it is plain that the wool of one of her sheep [...] is as long in the tail and appears to be more silky than any we know of in Europe.

No. 21 Brown Egg Shell Jars. These were among the China brought back from Revesby abbey and are of course of ancient date, the sort of ware is uncommon as egg shell is seldom seen much covered by the Pattern. Footnotes that 'neither the Japonese nor the European counterfeiter of Chinese porcelain have been able to simulate this kind which is strong as well as light while all the Japan and European wares are heavy and an inconvenience.

No. 22 Japon Basins and Covers. Lady Banks has two pairs [...] whether this is equal in elegance to the best China Ware is left to the taste and judgement of those who may study the comparative merits of these wares with diligence and success.

No. 23 Japon Brown Jars. Of this China Lady Banks possesses several pieces excellent in their kind [...]

No. 24 Scarlet Mandarin. Of this ancient ware which bears not the least

resemblance to the fashionable Mandarin pottery of the present day, Lady Banks possesses among other pieces two bottle shaped jars coloured blue, which are very rare and very beautiful on their sides are Chinese letters, these have not been read but are known no to refer to the date of the manufacture, she has also a thick square vessel on the side of which two models of the dragon Tats-ma-hi are placed.

No. 25 Ancient blue and white [...] Of this old blue and white Lady Banks possesses several exquisite Pieces, besides the large jars No 14 her small jars with covers are exquisite as are also two Basins that stand on the table, the Basins within them and the small plates on which they stand [...] are also of the very best of that beautiful manufacture, tho the largest Basins are decidedly the best.

No. 26 Embossed China. This sort of Ware is considered by the Chinese as the most valuable on account probably of the labour and skill necessary to form the Chameos on embossed figurines with which the surface is ornamented [...] the gilding upon them is remarkable and the pieces on the whole well worthy of examination.

No. 27 Crackle China [...]

No. 28 Queen Elizabeth's China is not mentioned for its beauty or its excellence but merely as an article which may be enquired after by the curious persons who wish to see what kind of China was first introduced into England. Lady banks has Plate and a Basin also ornamented with the figure of Deer, of what is admitted by the learned in China to be Queen Elizabeth's and they are certainly similar in appearance to the Piece of China at Blenheim which is said by the Housekeeper there (for it is not in Mr Spalding's collection) to have belonged to that Queen.

No. 29 China of Tou-Kien. Lady Banks has two square boxes widely different in appearance from every other piece in her Dairy, on both of them a Kilin is seen, the one coloured in a very dull red, the other in a green colour almost as imperfect, the white ground [...] has no gloss or shining appearance upon it, seems to answer perfectly the criterion 'qui n'a nul éclat' which the Pere Entrecolles

gives us to enable us to distinguish the Vases of Foo-Kien from all Others.

No. 30 The fish basin. Mentioned here more as a mythological curiosity than for any excellence of the ware or the Painting with which it is ornamented [...]

No. 31 Octoiad [...]

No. 32 Red incense Pot. Tho no doubt it is a modern ware resembles in its shape the ancient Vessel which we see painted on China jars etc. it is like an hour glass with a large squared bulb between the upper and the under cone [...] it appears to be an imitation of the Japanese Red Copper in which Metal no doubt vessels in China are cast and is said to be intended for the use of those private alters which no house in China can be without.

No. 33 Christian China. This is certainly a curiosity tho neither the vase or the Painting merit any commendation, it consists of three plates on which the crucifixion and resurrection and ascension of our Saviour are delineated, no doubt by the persons converted by the Jesuits to Christianity at the China Manufactory in Kin-ti-Tching, it does not however do much credit either to the instructions of the Converters or to the comprehension of the converted that Christ and the Soldiers who are sleeping in the picture of the resurrection, are evidently by their full breasts intended for female figurines.

No. 34 Partridge Bottles. These have the appearance of being very old, they are a light olive colour with slight traces under the Glazes and are ornamented with figures of Birds resembling Partridges.

No. 35 Small Box. This small piece of China came also from Revesby Abbey, it is ornamented with a light blue patter, but is chiefly remarkable for the great exactness with which the cover fits the bottom, a proof of the very superior quality of the materials with which China was anciently made, that shrunk little if at all in the fierce fire necessarily used in baking it.

No. 36 Chinese imitation of Saxon porcelains. This piece is a coffee pot made



contrast to the usage of the Chinese with its handles at right angles with the spout instead of being opposite to it. The Painting is exquisitely soft and beautiful, an evident proof of that the miniature stile of execution which we so much value here and pay for at so dear a rate, can be as well executed in China as either France in Germany or in England,. [begins list of other pieces] and no doubt many more pieces well worthy a particular examination, those who are more accustomed to examine old China and more experienced in its particular merits, will no doubt find in the collection many pieces not noticed that are as interesting as any above described and possibly some much more so.

No. 37 The Imperial Blue and White Jar. The piece is called imperial on account of the Devices painted upon it, which is similar to that on the Imperial Dish no 3 [...] the chief singularity of this design is that each of the two squadrons [...] from the circumstances we may infer that this is one for the early attempts of painting porcelain with the old blue colour and that it was not till after experience taught the Chinese that this colour could not be mingled in such a manner as to produce a gradation of tints, regularly losing themselves into each other, that they resorted to the expedients to manifest on the [...] blue and white China of using four or five separate tints of blue, distinct and separate from each other, this is in fact the stile so much admired by the Connoisseurs in China ware of the beginning of the last century called by them the four blues, the wares painted in this manner were valued by them above all other kinds of porcelain.

No. 38 Nankin jar. The shape of this jar is antique and resembles almost exactly that of the Battle Jar no. 2. It is clearly from the colour both of the white ground and of the blue painting up-on it Nakin, it is however the oldest of that kind [...] this Jar is placed on the table close by the ancient blue and white jar 37 for the purpose of enabling those who wish to obtain a knowledge of China to compare the Chinese with the European blues as well as to distinguish between the Chinese ware of Kin-ti-Tchin and that Nankin the manufactory of which soon failed and has been for many years wholly abandoned.

No. 39 The green saucer this piece of porcelain which is marked with the seal of Kien Long is chiefly valuable for bearing testimony to the Figure of Pussa

described in the appendix under the Article Mythology page [...] [The woman holding an umbrella] this emblem may also be seen on an elegant basin added to Lady Banks's collection in 1810. No. 40. The explanation of the eighth figure which resembles much the 7<sup>th</sup> must be left to the decision of persons better versed in the Hindoo and Chinese mythology.

No. 40 The Squared bason [...] has on its bottoms a seal which bears an antique appearance but which has not year been explained, it is the sort called Enammelled and very fine.

No. 41 The Octoiad Saucer appears to present something curious in Mythology with which we are quite unacquainted in the centre, a bivalve shell is represented out of which fire issues.

No. 42 Ware of the present Emperor. Of this ware [...] Lady Banks has some cups and saucers elegantly painted and of the best and most delicate egg shell [...] the value of this ware in China may be best estimated by the size of the package in which they were sent home; they were a part of a present from the rich Chinese merchant Can-Ke-Qua in return for some valuable articles sent to him by permission of the East India Company, the package for 10 cups and their saucers is in length 2 feet and 10 inches [...] in the whole nearly 2000 cubic inches, room enough to have held an abundance of China packed in Rice Straw as is commonly done, but these pieces has a separate compartment for each were stowed so they could not shake or move at all.

List taken from the 'Dairy Book', giving all the names known to the Bankses of types of porcelain.

*The Various Names given by Connoisseurs to types of Old China*

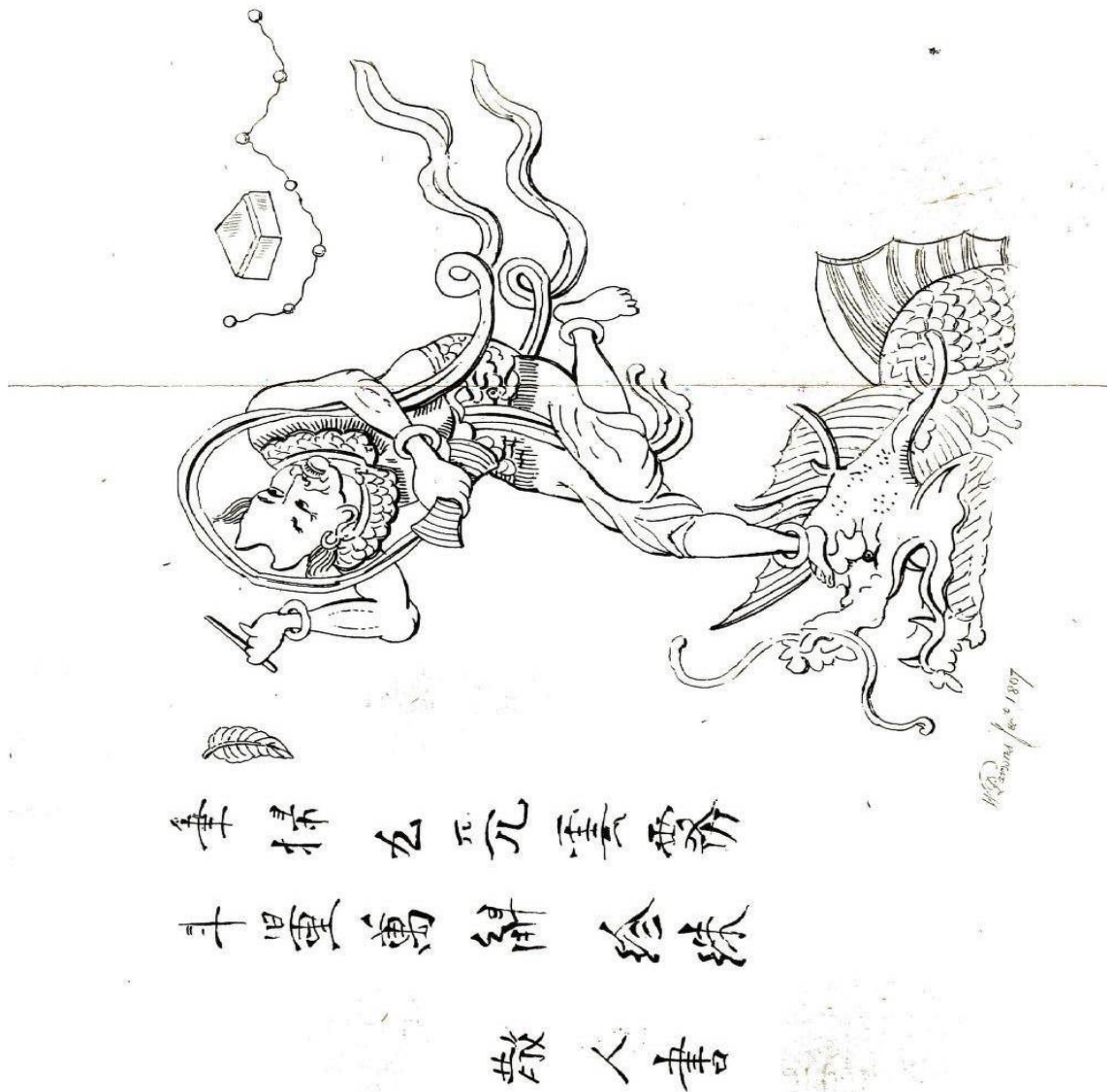
Agate China - L  
Bleu Celeste – B  
Bleu Old  
Black – L  
Burnt in  
Crackle  
Dragon  
Egg Shell  
Elizabeth (Queen's)  
Embossed  
Enamel  
Fillagree or pierced  
Honeycomb  
Image  
Japon  
Pale or Red  
Scarlet  
Blue and White  
Brown Edge  
Magic  
Mandarin  
Mazanine Blew  
Nankin Blue  
Quilted  
Pannel China  
Pencil  
Pierced or Fillagree  
Olive or Sea Green  
Scholars China  
Spinage and Egg  
Souffle Blew and Red  
Stone China  
Fruitee

## Chapter Five

### Fakes, Frauds and Forgeries: the European Mantle of Chineseness

Frontispiece, *Fragments of Oriental Literature with an outline of a painting on a curious china vase*, (London: S. Rousseau, 1807)

<[http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Fragments\\_of\\_oriental\\_literature.html?id=32YUAAAAQAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Fragments_of_oriental_literature.html?id=32YUAAAAQAAJ&redir_esc=y)> [Accessed 17 March 2011]



An example of Emperor Qianlong's work on porcelain which has been auctioned at Sotheby's. The catalogue gives the translation of the poem as follows:

While Imperial Ru ware is of renowned quality  
This new vase is made even finer.  
Since it follows me about I offer it this song,  
And along the road pick fragrant blossoms for it.  
Where it hangs is just right for my light carriage,  
But when hairclaps approach wild blossoms in it bend wavy.  
Though they never allow such worldly dust get close,  
They let their rich fragrance permeate my curtain gauze.

*A Rare Blue-Ground 'Famille-Rose*, 8 October 2008, Hong Kong: Sotheby's, Lot 2214 [sale catalogue]

<<http://www.sothebys.com/en/catalogues/ecatalogue.html/2008/legacies-of-imperial-power-treasures-from-the-imperial-collection-hk0294#/r=/en/ecat.fhtml.HK0294.html+r.m=/en/ecat.lot.HK0294.html/2202+r.o=/en/ecat.notes.HK0294.html/2214/>> [Accessed 2 May 2012].

## Chapter Six

### Dressing up Texts: the Satirical Chinese Texts of William Chambers and Peter Pindar



Johann Zoffany, *The Academicians of the Royal Academy*, [Oil on canvas].

Royal Collection Trust, London. (1771-72)

Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2013



## Chapter Seven

### Peter Pindar and the Satirical Dismantling of Translation, Monarchy and Empire



James Gillray, *Satan in all his glory; - or - Peter Pindar crouching to the devil*:  
John Wolcot; James Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale, [Etching]. National Portrait  
Gallery, London. (London: Hannah Humphrey, 8 May 1792)

NPG Image © National Portrait Gallery, London.





James Gillray, *The Reception of the Diplomatique & his Suite, at the Court of Peking*, [Hand-coloured etching]. British Museum, London. (London: Hannah Humphrey, 1792) BM Satires 8121 Image © Trustees of the British Museum.



James Gillray, *A Voluptuary under the Horrors of Digestion*, [Hand-coloured etching]. British Museum, London. (London: Hannah Humphrey, July 1792) BM Satires 8112 Image © Trustees of the British Museum.



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Gillray, James, *Satan in all his glory; - or - Peter Pindar crouching to the devil: John Wolcot; James Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale* [Etching]. National Portrait

Gallery, London. (London: Hannah Humphrey, 8 May 1792)

----- *The Reception of the Diplomatique & his Suite, at the Court of Pekin* [Hand-coloured etching]. British Museum, London. (London: Hannah Humphrey, 1792)

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